

# Creating Resonance in Emptiness with Visual Theatre

How the metaphorical potential of puppets, objects and  
images in theatre can be used to explore the constructed nature  
of reality and the complexity of the self

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## COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this explication is to set my practical theatre research, and the production *Dolos* in particular, in a theoretical framework and performance historical context. Since the central theme of *Dolos* is the construction of reality and the consequent attachment to aspects of the self, my study draws on the ideas proposed by Phenomenology and Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy.

According to these two philosophical systems, the concept of reality is subjective and relative. This leads me to question the functioning of meaning-making in artistic practice. Metaphor is explored as a vehicle for the meaning-making process and for the creation of resonant experience in theatre and performance.

The production style of *Dolos* is one that I have defined as Visual Theatre, a theatre of puppets, objects, visual and theatrical images. Visual Theatre is examined in the context of theatre as an artistic medium; it is then contextualised in terms of its development through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; and definitions are offered of the major elements at play within Visual Theatre.

A series of interviews conducted with five creator/ directors from four South African companies working in the general terrain of Visual Theatre is used to contextualise current practice in South Africa and to locate my own work. The interviews are used to establish trends of thought around the object/puppet and its relationship in theatre to constructed reality. The views of these practitioners on their own creative process as well as my observations about their practical work are used as examples throughout.

The principal modes of object and puppet manipulation are outlined and some of their possible metaphorical connotations are indicated. While the semiological approach used in this section clearly has its limitations, it serves the purpose of laying out the principal dynamics. The thematic concerns are explored practically throughout the paper and aspects of the production placed within the various dynamics considered.

The use of objects and puppets in *Dolos* to explore the layered concepts of self is then discussed.

I conclude that within the realm of relative reality where meaning is constructed and resonance occurs, several diverse theoretical systems can be employed to approach an understanding of the creation of resonance. I suggest that the rich connotations of puppets, objects and images in theatre allow for metaphorical resonance in the reality of the perceiver.

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## INTRODUCTION

Art is an expression of human experience. Either an expression of the experience of ourselves or of the world as we perceive it. It is, I believe, through contacting the experience of others that our perceptions can be broadened and even transformed. While not all art aims at direct transformation, the very fact that this form of expression exists makes a broadening of experience available. From a Madhymaka Buddhist perspective reality is a series of relative mental constructs. It is out of the mind that creative expression arises and in the mind that it takes on meaning. How does this work? How does one person's or a small group of people's expression become something that touches others? How does visual theatre lend itself to this process? How, particularly, does it create metaphorical connotations which relate to the construct of self? These questions, explored in the making of *Dolos* are examined here in relation to the production's formal choices as well as its philosophical and theatrical context.

Artistic expression is determined by, and revealed through an individual's relationship with reality (including perception, values and beliefs) and the context in which that individual sees herself creating. It is a product of our experience of ourselves within this context or of some aspect of the reality we perceive ourselves to be part of. However, artistic expression is also a form of communication with other human beings that involves the creation of meaning. This is a complex process involving the original impetus, the medium of expression and the relationship of the audience/perceiver/witness to the medium of expression. Which medium of expression is used and how it is used is largely determined by the intention(s) of the creator(s). These intentions are determined for each individual by the context in which

she sees herself creating, her 'worldview'. This view is determined, in turn by the creator's construct of reality.

The way that the expression is interpreted, the associations which are set up and the resonance created, all rely on the relationship between the expression and the worldview of the perceiver. It is in the minds of the creator and perceiver that metaphor is established. Metaphor exists in the relationship of what is perceived to an already established field of experience in the mind. An exploration of the metaphorical potential of a medium of artistic expression is therefore integrally related to the individual's perception of reality.

Our perception of 'reality' is a constant process of using concepts to represent perceptions including emotions, images and dynamics. In theatre this process is amplified as the context is presented as constructed. The metaphorical potential of puppets, objects and images used in the theatrical context is enormous. Much of puppetry works with the tension between what is present and what we experience, between the construction of an illusion and being trapped in (driven by and unconscious of) this construction. As objects and images are used to convey aspects of ourselves and our realities, they become obvious as representations through their imperfection. So the illusion of 'reality' is made obvious and so, potentially, broken down. 'The constructed nature of reality and perception can become the subject of the performance.' When these metaphorical tools are used consciously, they can provoke associations which relate to the subtle layering of the concept of self and the experience of being human.

While metaphor is an abstract concept resulting from and residing in abstract realms, the communication must be carried in a material form or medium. The great variety of theatrical forms carry meaning in different ways. As a theoretical placement of *Dolos*, this paper examines these questions through Visual Theatre (theatre based on the theatrical image). Visual theatre is a mixed medium of expression, bringing visual media to the theatrical context. This paper looks at how Visual Theatre can capture and



create individual meaning through the tools of direct experience as well as through the metaphorical potential of objects, puppets and visual images in this context. Both phenomenology and semiology are used to support and develop the examination of these mediums and particular attention is paid to the illusions potentially created and broken by them.

*Dolos* and the theoretical questions surrounding it are placed in a South African Visual Theatre context through a series of interviews conducted by the author with South African theatre-maker/directors who rely strongly on theatrical images in their own work. These theatre-makers have been consulted on a number of questions surrounding the use of objects and images in theatre as a way of expressing and communicating their experience of reality. Examples of their work have been used to discuss and illustrate points throughout the paper.

The majority of theatre-makers interviewed began their artistic careers using fine art as their primary medium. Both Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones (of Handspring Puppet Company) trained as fine artists (BAFA sculpture, UCT) and, while Kohler had a longstanding interest in puppetry, it was only some years after graduating that Jones began to explore the potential of theatre and puppet theatre. All of Handspring's work is object (puppet) based and the company's connection to fine art remains strong. Their collaborative works with William Kentridge have been widely performed in both traditional theatres and galleries internationally.

Mark O'Donovan (of the Odd Enjinears) specialised in sculpture (through UNISA) and his first performances were street-based kinetic sculptures. These have evolved into full length performances using multiple constructions and performers. O'Donovan continues to create both performative pieces and kinetic public sculptures.

Gerhard Marx (of Duckrabbit) has a Masters degree in Fine Art (University of the Witwatersrand). His final exhibition took the form of a performance (*They Say*) and he has formed the theatre company Duckrabbit with Lara Foot-Newton. Foot-Newton and Marx work together in creating theatre that speaks through objects and words. Marx

currently lectures in the University of the Witwatersrand drama department, continues to produce theatre work and has had several solo exhibitions.

My own work is strongly influenced by my studies in fine art (BAFA sculpture, UCT) as is my interest in the communicative power of objects in theatre. My particular interest in puppet theatre was developed from an attraction to using a time-based medium which allows for the development of layered metaphorical meanings and narrative. These interests were expanded in my practical studies of theatre (what is described here as Visual Theatre) at ESNAM (Ecole Superiur Nationale des arts de la Marionnette, France) where I completed a three year DMA in the medium. To these formal concerns was added an interest in the complex relations and tensions set up between object and live performer and their ability to capture diverse human experience.

Mark Fleishman (of Magnet Theatre) is somewhat the exception to the rule here in that his primary medium of expression and creation has always been theatre. However the striking and frequent use of objects (masks, puppets and more) in his work as well as his collaborative projects with Pippa Skotnes, tie his work to the field of art and make the relevance of his views on the use of objects in theatre pertinent.

Throughout this paper terms are used which can have open-ended interpretations. I will narrow a few of them down here so that what I mean by them can be understood more precisely. I will use the single female form *her* or *she* to refer to an individual but this should be taken to mean her/his or she/he. Perceiver is used to describe an individual audience member of a show and/or spectator of a performance. *object* is a general term which refers to a physical thing whether it be figurative or not and whether it is being used to simulate life or not. *Puppet* will be used more specifically to refer to the object that is being used, in performance, to simulate life. *Performer* will be used as a general term to refer to any person directly involved in the performance, with or without an object in hand. *Manipulator* will refer to a performer who is moving an object in a way that creates the illusion of

independent movement or a simulation of life in the object. *Reality* is taken to mean the constructed reality or world view of the person concerned. It is not real as such but it is the real view that that individual has established. It is the relative truth for that individual.

## RESONANCE IN THE ILLUSION OF REALITY

### The Illusion of Reality and the reality of illusion

According to the Collins English Dictionary, reality is defined as follows:

*Reality n 1 The state of things as they are or as they appear to be, rather than as one might wish them to be 2 something that is real 3 the state of being real 4 philosophy 4a that which exists independent of human awareness.*

While this standard definition of reality captures the common perception of it, it does not touch on the underlying essence of reality as a construct. When we consider what is real in the space of a performance, what we are most likely to see first is the physical presence of things as they appear. According to the Collins definition, this would include the elements of the performance and performance space that exist independently of individual wishes and human appearance. The audience, the performers, the set and performance objects, the theatre or performance space and possibly the action of the show, will come too mind. However, looking at these a little more closely we can quickly see that none of them exist independent of human awareness and they are no more or less real than the things eliminated from this list such as the narrative, the dynamics of interaction between performers, the atmosphere in the space. The 'audience' for example, does not exist. It is a construct, a label given

to a group of people with apparently the same purpose at a particular moment: to watch a performance. However, they are not necessarily all there for the same purpose at all and the reason we think they are is one of convenience. It may be argued then that what is real is that there are people in the space. But the terms 'people' or even 'human beings' are constructs and, according to Buddhist philosophy, have no independent existence.

Because we don't and can't know all the variables involved, we create constructs (such as the concept 'audience') for groups of dynamics and entities. These concepts often become fixed in our minds and related to as reality. This has two major consequences. The first is that our understanding of the construct we call reality is automatically simplified and limited. The second consequence is that anything that does not fit into a clear construct, is not ultimately considered 'real'. Thus, for example, we will think that 'an audience', because it is physically present in the space, is more 'real' than an individual's emotional reaction to what happens in the theatre.

In A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms, Quinn explores reality in the context of appearance:

*appearance/reality: A recurring theme in literature, the distinction between what appears to be and what has taken on a wide variety of forms. Its classical statement occurs in the Myth of the Cave in Plato's Republic... (The) movement from appearance to reality is based on a philosophy of idealism, the belief that ultimate reality resides in ideas, not in matter.*

*(Quinn, 1999: 24)*

John Cage who has worked extensively in challenging the concept of reality in performance states:

*You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It doesn't wait for us to change...It is*

*more mobile than you can imagine. You are getting closer to reality when you say that it 'presents itself'; that means it is not there, existing as an object. It is a process.*

*(Cage and Charles, 1981 in Kaye, 1994: 3)*

According to phenomenology reality is constituted by our perceptions. That a 'reality' exists 'behind' these perceptions is considered speculation (Simms, 2003: 10). In experiencing the world around us we use the filter of our senses to perceive the form of something. Experience of the world happens through the body (Fortier 2002: 38). Sensory information is collected and located in a concept of a particular thing. The function that the object in question performs is added as further concept. The individual's collected perceptions are brought together to form a concept or a consciousness of the thing (Simms, 2003: 11). These collected concepts 'conceal' the original object and cloud the perceiver's ability to experience its true nature (States 1984: 22). Phenomenology has as a major concern the sensory and mental phenomena that manifest through the engagement of the individual consciousness with the external. This is called lived experience (Fortier 2002, 41).

Madhymaka, a Buddhist school of philosophy, approaches the concept of reality from a different perspective to most western schools. 'Madhymaka', translated from the Sanskrit means 'middle way'. It considers itself midway between eternalism and nihilism (HE Tai Situpa 2005: 321). Madhymaka does not attempt to approach 'truth' from a subjective point of view. 'Truth', by definition is objective and therefore involves no subject-object division. It cannot therefore be approached, except through non-subjectivity. Truth is mostly approached through eternalism (a belief in the lasting existence of individual consciousness) which is a matter of faith and therefore highly subjective. Nihilism, on the other hand asserts that there is no truth to be attained. Madhymaka asserts that there is no ultimate truth within the relative experience of existence. There is an 'ultimate' reality but this cannot be approached by the subjective mind engaged in relative reality. Like the western philosophical systems discussed

here, Madhyamaka examines the conscious and unconscious processes of sensorial and conceptual experience. Within the framework of relative existence (further discussed in the next section) relative experiences are relevant to the human experience of 'self' and reality.

The Collins English Dictionary defines illusion as follows:

*Illusion n 1 a false appearance or deceptive impression of reality 2 a false or misleading perception or belief; delusion 3 psychol a perception that is not true to reality, having been altered subjectively in the mind of the perceiver.*

Since all concepts of reality are influenced by the mind which perceives them, and applying this definition to the term, reality and the perception of independent existence are themselves illusory.

### **The constructed self, a Madhyamaka Buddhist perspective**

A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms, defines self as follows:

*Self: The new sense of self no longer suggests the unified, autonomous individual of traditional humanism, or even the divided self later conceived in existentialism. In contemporary theory, self has given way to the term subject to suggest being "constructed" by our language-determined, culturally driven modes of thinking. Among the illusions entertained by the "subject" is that he or she possesses an inner, autonomous "self".*

*(Quinn, 1999: 196)*

According to the Encyclopaedia of Psychology (2000), produced by the American Psychological Association, the concept of the self has seen a resurgence of interest post 1980 in Western psychological studies. This has been particularly focussed on the self

as a schema or construct from the social-cognitive point of view. The individual's global self-concept is seen to be constructed from a series of contextualized selves or 'family of selves'. The focus of research has been how these concepts of self influence individual cognition. What has emerged is that while 'possible selves' provide goals for the individual, the discrepancy between them and the perceived reality are a source of guilt and anxiety. Further, it has also been established that we look for verification of self-concept and information that enhances our sense of self even if this contradicts the tendency to self-enhancement. (vol 6: 104).

In Madhyamaka philosophy the idea of 'self' as a constructed concept is an old and well-established one. The nature of the self and that of reality are at the core of this philosophical system. The concept of 'reality' is referred to in two ways: relative and ultimate. Relative reality is based on the illusion of an independently existing self. This is the dualistic (self and other, separation) illusion in which we experience ourselves living. Ultimate reality, on the other hand, is defined in contrast to the relative, and is non-dualistic.

*Primordial wisdom is the essence of everything, the emptiness that is the ultimate truth. The way everything manifests is relative truth.*

*(HE Tai Situpa, 2005:76)*

The idea of an independently existing self arises in relative reality and as such is an illusion. It is, however, a powerful illusion on which the rest of our relationship with relative reality is based. The human mind is constantly involved in a process of defining self and non-self. Jean-Paul Sartre (Existential Phenomenologist) asserted that humans bring nothing to their consciousness of the world, making them responsible for their relationship with it. According to Sartre, 'not-myself' is the defining factor of self (Fortier, 2002:43). Similar to the Phenomenological view, Madhyamaka asserts that the human mind is perpetually engaged in a process of interpreting lived experience.

However, from a Madhyamaka point of view focus is not placed on the lived experience of phenomenology but rather on the internal relationship with the mental constructs. In relating to the construct of self, the human mind seeks agreement from other human beings to create certainty (HE Tai Situpa, 2005:76). As this process happens the idea of self becomes something to maintain and defend. It becomes more complex but also more solid as the mind gathers evidence for its existence.

*We do not realize that the nature of our mind is emptiness and consequently fail to recognize it. We then falsely fabricate the notion that the self exists of its own accord and cling to it as a solid entity. At the same time the mind possesses the aspect of unobstructed lucidity (its ultimate nature). Failing to recognize (this)... we think other things exist and cling to them as distinct and real. Having generated the assumption that self and other truly exist of their own accord, attachment and aversion evolve. Dualistic concepts evolve from...attachment and aversion...Since we cling to the duality of self and other, we grasp at all experiences and things as concrete and abstract existents.*

*(Janggon Kongtrul Rinpoche in HE Tai Situpa, 2005: 298)*

According to Madhyamaka, all things are empty of inherent existence. This does not mean that nothing exists but rather that nothing exists independently as an entity.

*...emptiness or selflessness...means the absence of a permanent, unitary and independent self or, more subtly, the absence of inherent existence either in living beings or in other phenomena.*

*(HH Dalai Lama, 2002: 142)*

*"Emptiness" means that everything is nothing more and nothing less than the interdependent manifestation of everything else.*

*(HE Tai Situpa, 2005:74)*

The mind creates its relationship with all other phenomena and with itself. The mind



and the object of perception are inseparable. There are several different schools of Buddhist philosophical thought that take different approaches to explaining appearances as mind. In the Hinayana view the form an appearance takes in the mind is shaped by the sensory consciousness and therefore not equal to the 'object'. What we perceive is something that arises in the mind. However this view holds that there are, in fact, externally existing objects. In the Mahayana (which includes Madhyamaka) view on the other hand, there are no external objects that cause the perception of appearances (Thrangu, 2004: 108). According to this school it is the mind that perceives and in the mind that the perception is formed into concept, therefore the perceived thing and the mind are one (Thrangu, 2004: 109). Appearances seem to have external existence but this is as mountains appear to be real in a dream.

*...appearances are the mind and... they have no external existence...Even though there is nothing, appearances still occur as if there is something....the mind manifests all of our sensory perceptions. Nonexistent things appear as if they do exist but they are just the appearances of the mind. The mind itself takes on the form of an object of perception, but there is no external object composed of material atoms which acts as a cause. Thus it is possible for there to be perceptions without the existence of an external object....In this way (it is) established...that perceptions are mental appearances, that appearances are the mind.*

*(Thrangu, 2004: 110)*

As human beings we define ourselves as 'I' or 'myself'. This 'self' usually includes an idea of 'me' and 'my body'. We have the sense that the body, is not who we are but part of the self. We often think of the body as a vehicle for the mind where the two are related but separate entities. According to Madhyamaka, the body and mind are inseparable:

*Look for the boundary between the mind and the body, and you will not find any difference between them. They are the same. You will not find any difference between the body and the*

*mind because the body is an appearance of the mind.*

*(Thrangu, 2004: 112)*

The mind, according to this view is not the intellect or intellectual functioning but should rather be thought of as consciousness or awareness. This mind creates concepts for the appearance of body and becomes attached to these concepts as part of the 'self'. So the mind defines the body and through this defines the self. We say things like 'I am tall' or 'I am a woman'. We don't say 'I have a woman's body' or 'the body appears to the mind as woman'. This is because in the mind, the body is 'woman' and the body is 'self'. It is easy to see in the example of the physical body how we identify conceptually with its concrete existence. However, there are many ways in which we define ourselves some of which are totally unrecognized consciously. These definitions determine ways of being, action and relationship with what is perceived to be external.

While phenomenology places great importance on the sensorial experience of the body and posits that it is through this experience that truth can be attained, Madhymaka places the results of the senses in the same category as all other conceptual experience: dualistic and therefore relative. This is not to say they are not relevant and/or to be written off or ignored. To the contrary, it is through the practice of mindfulness (knowing what is happening while it is happening) that suppressed material can be integrated and the mind brought eventually to an experience of emptiness.

From a psychodynamic perspective, the integration of material can be outlined simply as follows: the language of the unconscious is one of condensation (multiple significance contained in a single image or dynamic) and displacement (associated images and dynamics representing repressed ones) (Fortier 2002: 90). Jacques Lacan, has asserted that the mechanisms of condensation and displacement are equivalent to metaphor and metonymy (Fortier 2002: 90). Lacan describes the human subject as a chain of signifiers suggested by the unconscious to the conscious mind, and that by

extension she is subjected to these signifiers and lives in an inescapable mental world (Fortier 2002: 91). The aim of psychotherapy is to integrate unconscious concepts thereby transforming the individual's relationship with the real. For psychoanalysis the real exists but the individual cannot access it. While the aim of integration in psychoanalysis is to develop a more healthy relationship with the self, in Madhyamaka Buddhist practice it is to eventually free the mind of the concept of self that holds it in relative and dualistic existence.

### **Resonance and the making of meaning**

*Resonance (from the Latin echo)...the term refers to the magnetic effect of metaphor which organises the elements of a poem into a harmonic code...(It can be used) to express the a sense of thematic fullness....*

*(Meyers & Simms, 1989:255)*

Artistic expression is effective when it touches the perceiver. This is achieved through a process of meaning making, both on the part of the creator and of the perceiver.

Resonance and the making of meaning can be understood through both semiology and phenomenology. Semiology, the study and science of signs, investigates the production of meaning by both theatre practitioners and perceiver based on analysis of the theatre product (text/performance etc.) (Pavis, 1998: 326). The sign (such as an object, words or a dynamic) is both the plane of expression (making it signifier to the creator) and the plane of content (making it the signified to the perceiver) (Pavis, 1998: 327). As the sign itself has no independent existence of its creator(s) and perceiver(s) (from a Madhyamaka perspective) it exists in a relationship between these two. The process of exchange established between the signifier or plane

of expression and the signified or plane of content is one of semiosis (mutual co-dependence) (Pavis, 1998: 328). Correlation is established between the original impetus (and productive reading) of the director and the receptive reading (and resonance) of the spectator, resulting in a dynamism in the production of meaning (Pavis, 1998: 328). Phenomenology shifts the emphasis away from the reading of 'signs' and onto the perceptual experience. From this perspective what is important is not so much the referential significance of the sign but its power beyond concept (States, 1985: 20).

Within the mind of both the creator and the perceiver there is a layering of relationship with the sign. In the creator, an original impetus motivates (both internally and creatively) the plane of expression that is then the signifier. In the perceiver, the signified sign resonates with codes of interpretation producing a plane of content and sensorial experience. Resonance is the internal sensation stimulated by meaning and perception.

While at the moment a person resonates with something the sensation is similar to understanding, recognition and empathy,, it is not the same as any of these. To understand is to grasp something conceptually. To recognise is to fit the perceived object to an already formed concept. Recognition and the effect thereof can be important in the process of meaning exchange. It is through recognition of the aspects of the performance (ideological, psychological or literary) on the part of the spectator that the illusion required for fiction is developed (Pavis, 1998: 307). When a spectator recognizes a reality, feeling or attitude as something already experienced, this is known as the *recognition effect* or *reality effect* (Pavis, 1998: 307). Pavis says of this effect that the spectator derives a certain pleasure from it as, in Psychoanalytic terms, it allows for an appropriation and affirmation of a repressed aspect of the self (Pavis, 1998: 308). Empathy when defined as sensory self-projection (States 1985:104) is very close to resonance. However as it is most often interpreted as emotional projection

based on relating to representation, I will avoid the term in favour of resonance which is not dependant on identification with a character or dynamic.

Resonance is the experience of the recognised and the unrecognised (subconscious, repressed, suppressed and associated material) being stimulated at the same time. Simply recognising something consciously does not provoke resonance. It is the emotional charge attached to the recognised that provokes resonance. While recognition, understanding and empathy can be keys to stimulating resonance, the result of resonance is not necessarily that an individual reaches understanding nor is it that something familiar is confirmed through recognition. Further to this, resonance can occur without any symbolic understanding or conceptual recognition, through sensation. Neither the original impetus of creation nor the final resonance are necessarily conscious concepts.

It is through the medium of expression (the sign, image, object of form) that concepts and sensations meet, individual realities are negotiated, and meaning is made. It is therefore relevant to examine the connotative implications of signs created when objects are brought into the theatre space. The more profound concepts that we hold are multi-faceted, complex compounds of association. When they are stimulated, a dynamic process is set up where one recognition stimulated by resonance causes resonance with another complex or aspect of the same complex and so creates further resonance. This, in turn affects the way the medium is perceived. This process can continue indefinitely with the meaning and experience for the perceiver developing layers of associative resonance.

Semiologists have often attempted to categorise and define specific theatrical objects of knowledge or codes contained within the performance. Pavis, however, asserts:

*Instead of considering the code as a system buried in the performance that has to be updated by analysis, it would be more accurate to speak of a process of establishing a code by the*

*interpreter, for it is the receiver who, as Hermeneut, decides to read a particular aspect of the performance according to a particular, freely-selected code.*

*(Pavis, 1998: 329).*

Because artistic expression is not necessarily about defined cognitive interpretation, it can allow for a communicative experience beyond the conscious mind.

It is in this context that the reality of the director and spectator become relevant and are examined. The individual perceiver is a mind containing conscious and unconscious constructs, built around an idea of self (discussed further below). This is the individual's reality. In order to touch the individual, the artwork must resonate with these constructs. The theatre creator's concern is to reach the reality of the perceiver. While it is important to consider the connotations associated with objects in theatre, the metaphorical implications or predictable meanings are only one aspect of their resonant potential. The rest is dependant on, and explored through, the individual relationship of the creator and the spectator with the product. Edward Gordon Craig argued for the puppet as an ultimately controllable sign but this has been criticised as a closed system (Pavis, 1998: 330). Lyotard went further and called for what he called "generalised desemiotics":

*(An) enigmatic theatre (that) need not suggest this or that; nor need it say so as Brecht wished. It is to produce the highest intensity (by excess or by default) of what is there, unintentionally..*

*(Lyotard in Pavis, 1998: 331)*

In relation to the fluidity of this communication, from the point of view of the creator, Mark Fleishman reflects:

*The image is not empty, it's full of thought, there are ideas that are connected to it and ideas that resonate from it. There is a thing of intentionality here as to how much of that image is constructed intentionally incorporating elements that may be present or not...theatre makes*

*intentionality quite difficult. There are so many variables at play...As a theatre director/creator you have to be quite open and say 'what will happen will happen'.*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

## **Metaphor**

**Metaphor:** *(from the Greek "to transfer, to carry across") a rhetorical figurative expression of similarity or dissimilarity in which a direct, no literal substitution or identity is made between one thing and another...*

*(Meyers, J & Simms, M, 1989:178)*

One of the most important human cognitive abilities is imagination (of which metaphor and metonymy are devices) involving the projection of concepts onto other concepts, formulated through language (Barcelona 2000: 3). In this context, metaphor is defined as the cognitive mechanism of projecting (or mapping) one experiential domain (the source domain) onto another (target domain).

At the core of the metaphor is the experiential domain. Characterised by most cognitive linguists as 'encyclopaedic', the experiential domain contains all entrenched knowledge an individual has about that area of experience and as such is greatly varied from one individual to another (Barcelona 2000: 9). Where specific experiential domains begin and end is hugely varied and interdependent.

Paul Ricoeur, has written extensively on metaphor (Ricoeur, 1977). He explores it in the context of his theory of hermeneutics and the hermeneutical circle. He looks at the history of metaphor in language and philosophy and discusses it at the level of the word (rhetoric), at the level of the sentence (semantics) and at the level of discourse (defined as the domain of hermeneutics) (Simms 2003: 61).

Hermeneutics began for Ricoeur as a study of the interpretation of the symbols in text and broadened to include not only individual words or sentences but also the

text as a sum of its parts. Ricoeur extends the reading of symbols into the world, reading the world as text. Further to this, Ricoeur suggests that the reading of the world as text and the reading of written texts is the access to self-understanding, as this textual reading provides a bridge between the subjectivity of the self and the objectivity of the world (Simms 2003: 43). This reading of the world is, at base, phenomenological. The intention of the perceiver to perceive gives the results of perception and yet the results influence the intention of the perceiver. So what is perceived is determined by the concepts brought to it, and the perceived object, in turn, influences us through changing the perception we bring. This is known as the hermeneutical circle.

Ricoeur's examination of metaphor is largely based on this circle. While most of Ricoeur's work is placed in the literary context, the conclusions he draws can be applied to any medium of expression. Ricoeur describes the relationship of the perceiver to the metaphor as one in which the perceiver associates the form (metaphorical image) with its active context. He describes this as metaphor allowing *mimesis* (imitation, descriptive association, representation) in *muthos* (plot, action) to capture human experience and bring it to life for the perceiver. The metaphor is not here simply a descriptively associated image but rather a vessel for creating association with human action and intention (Simms 2003: 64).

The power of the metaphor lies in its capacity to provoke in the perceiver a process of conscious or subconscious interpretation (experiential domain). As Simms states:

*Metaphors are only valuable because they force the listener or reader to interpret them. This work of interpretation is itself an intrinsic part of the metaphoric process. As a process, it involves the linking of the word to the context of the whole sentence in which it is located, but also in the cultural context of the discourse in which the sentence is located. This is what it means to be alive, to be an interpreting being- and so it is the metaphorical dimension of language which is the most alive in language.*

*(Simms, 2003: 73)*



The same is true of visual metaphors, and objects used metaphorically in theatre. Not only do they provoke, through interpretation, broader associations with the subject but they also reflect and provoke associations with the context both physical and cultural from which they originate or are created.

In his philosophical examination of the nature of metaphor, Roger White asserts that metaphors are often complex and ambiguous and should be read in the context from which they arise (White 1996: 136). As the understanding of the metaphor is expanded, it becomes important to see metaphors as represented fields of experience (which may include whole sentences or the whole plot line, a single image or a combination of images, associated sensations, emotions etc.) used to partially map another field of experience.

In his article on the metonymies and metaphors employed in advertising, Friedrich Ungerer (2000) explores the experiential domains provoked through the pictorial and image-based elements of this form of communication. The experiential domains discussed vary from the social and hierarchical (represented in the white coats of lab technicians) to the visceral (a digesting snake) and even the tactile (the shape of a perfume bottle) all of which are used to key in to the recipient's 'grabbing instinct' which represents desire (Ungerer, 2000: 332). In the case of advertising, metaphorical implications of objects and images are used to provoke and defend the basic emotion of desire. In the context of theatre, images and objects can have similarly powerful implications. However, they are unlikely to be used in such a clearly directive manner.

The reason for the provocation of interpretation by metaphors is that they allow for *seeing as* and not simply *seeing*. *Seeing as* is defined by Ricoeur as halfway between experiencing and acting. This *seeing as* relies on the intuition and imagination of the perceiver (Simms 2003: 74). The metaphor sets up tensions between the image and that which it represents, between the source and the target domains. The perceiver is aware that the representation is not the same as that which it represents and yet is also aware of how they relate. Arriving at a metaphorical truth requires the perceiver to suspend

judgement of the literal truth of the image (Simms 2003: 75). This relates closely to the willing suspension of disbelief that is important in theatre as a whole and in puppetry in particular.

. From a phenomenological point of view, it is an encounter with the actual that brings about the most vital experience:

*At the bottom, it is not a matter of the illusory, the mimetic or the representational, but of a certain kind of actual, of having something before one's vision-and in theatre one's hearing-to which we join our being...All this has much to do with signification...(b)ut real engagement is an enactment of being.*

*(States, 1985:46-47)*

The making of meaning can therefore be seen to occur through three key access points to individual reality. Firstly, through lived experience, the sensorial apprehension of entities and dynamics. Secondly, through conception, the formation of conscious and unconscious concepts around experience. Thirdly, through metaphor, the mapping of one experiential (and conceptual) domain onto another. Resonance occurs with all three as it is the non-linguistic experience of meaning being created.

## **PUPPETS, OBJECTS AND VISUAL THEATRE**

In considering the metaphorical potential of puppets and objects in theatre, it is useful to examine both the object/image itself (its material form) and how it used as a basis for exploring its connotative meanings. In this study, the form and origin of the object, how it can be used in apparent independence from the performer and finally the relationship that can be established between object and performer are examined.

In order to examine the meaning created by puppets, object and images in theatre these mediums in themselves, and the dynamic which relates them, need to be

defined. Since they are all being used within the theatre, the specific qualities of theatre as a medium are also discussed below.

### **Theatre as an artistic medium**

Visual Theatre (further discussed in the following sub-section) is a mixed medium which brings together expression through images and expression through performance. These 'qualities' of theatre as a medium place the visual elements in a specific context that interacts with them to create metaphor and resonance. Theatre and performance have three specific qualities: live human presence, space and time.

**Live presence:** In theatre, some human presence is a given; the presence of the performer and the presence of the witness to the performance or perceiver. This live presence allows for a unique moment of communication. There is an ephemerality to the product in that it is never the same and it cannot, in its entirety, be preserved. Theatre provides a live space of encounter between theatre-makers as well as between the performers and perceiver. It is the embodiment of this shared experience that is specific to theatre as an art form. From a phenomenological point of view, this shared experiential space provides opportunities for creating lived experience for the perceiver. Jones speaks about the vitality of this experience for the perceiver:

*Theatre allows us to re-see moments, quite simple moments sometimes, in a fresh way. ...That freshness is a heady experience. It is something that is intensely desirable to us. .*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2005)*

The newness of this apprehension relates to the phenomenological concept of 'enhanced being' that comes with a new experience of the actual (States, 1985:46), or

to resonance as established above. When the performance resonates for the perceiver, she becomes involved, projecting into the space. The perceiver knows that what she is perceiving is not real as part of her everyday world, yet the experience of it is real in that moment as an experience. This creates a potential space for individuals to release emotion (some form of catharsis) and/or to become conscious of their projections. Kohler speaks about the experientially charged and potentially cathartic nature of lived experience in theatre:

*Theatres hold some kind of magic for me as spaces of potential. ...It's the moment of performance when the live audience and live performers meet. When it works... I think the theatre can have the same kind of charged atmosphere of a church service, in that the audience believes... the emotions of the actors and the audience bond and pile one on top of the other until satisfaction is reached.*

(Kohler and Jones, 2005)

The performance is invested with this energy and affected by it. The rhythm of the piece is established specifically in relation to this flow of interest and energy from the perceiver to the performance. In this unique space of interaction the challenge for the performer is to maintain resonance in the perceiver. This challenge determines the form and content of the work as well as the rhythm.

**Time:** Because theatre involves a series of events that occur in succession there is a specific relationship to time. As events happen in succession there is automatically a relationship established between them. There is the potential for associations to be formed between what has been seen and the imagined outcome, between the illusions created in one moment and broken in the next. It is also in the association of one moment to the next that narrative is created. Narrative, story and development all exist as a function of the element of time in theatre. Phenomenologically, the element of time

in theatre allows for the revelation of objects in a context that transforms and therefore loosens, the concepts formed around them. Gerhard Marx, whose work is grounded in a phenomenological approach says of this:

*As a sculptor, what one would do, in order to create or affect meaning in an object, is to sculpt the actual object .... What theatre enables us to do is to sculpt the meaning of the object without altering the object. The storyline and narration of the piece allows me to reveal the object in many ways.*

*(Marx, 2005)*

**Space:** The space in which the performance takes place is another given element of performance. This can vary greatly from a space constructed specifically for performance (a theatre), to a requisitioned indoor or outdoor environment (for site-specific performance). Marx talks about the designated theatre space and how it creates the potential for revelation of its elements at a new level to its perceiver.

*From the moment the perceiver is seated, they know that everything is present but it is only revealed through time as it gains or loses importance. ...Everything placed in the gallery space carries meaning but in the theatre things gain meaning in how they become related to one another [over time].*

*(Marx, 2005)*

The movement of the elements of the performance as well as their movement in relation to one another are also created in space. The significance of the illusion of life which the movement of a puppet (object) can create can be read in a semiotic context as a signifier that relates directly to key concepts of self. This is discussed by Kohler :

*By representing human life on stage you flatter the perceiver. ...It's like looking at a life force...it is really the recognition of simple details of life, the puppet represents life...I would say (theatre is) a distillation of real life, a poetry of real life, it's a narrowing down onto a few*

*elements so that you focus on and examine those aspects of life.*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2005)*

Theatre is a live medium that allows for the establishment of relationships and the construction of meaning, creating a layering of resonance, meanings and associations. It is the dynamics of space and time as well as the live relationship between performers, objects and perceivers which distinguishes theatre and performance from other forms of classic visual artistic expression such as sculpture.

### **Puppets, objects and images**

The puppet is an object. It may be an anthropomorphic figurative object or it may be a 'found' object. The figurative object, constructed to perform, is always referred to as a puppet as this is its primary function. The 'found' object, on the other hand, becomes a puppet only in a certain context, handled in a certain way. The term 'found' in this context indicates an object that had a previous function outside the theatre. This is not necessarily a function related to human activity (a seed pod would be included) but the form of the object has not been changed to make it unrecognisable in its previous form. Found objects can also be combined and worked on, but, to maintain their status as found, they must maintain the basic integrity of their original form. When found objects are combined to form a figurative body, they become puppets. In other words a block of wood attached as a head to an old shirt would be a composite found object puppet. A block of wood carved to look like a head with a strip of cloth for a body would be a puppet. The fact that the cloth may have been found is immaterial as it is not recognisable as having a function other than the body of the puppet.

When asked to define puppetry Basil Jones of Handspring Puppet Company says:

*A form of performance in which an inanimate object is manipulated in front of an perceiver*

and Adrian Kohler adds:

*to simulate life.*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2004)*

To manipulate is, according to the Concise English Dictionary, "to treat with the hands; to handle; to operate upon so as to disguise." In the context of puppetry it is precisely this. In puppet manipulation the way the object is moved or handled gives it the quality of being something other than what it is. When the found object is manipulated it becomes a puppet. However, unless it is combined in a figurative composition it is unlikely to be referred to as a puppet. Theatre using objects in this way is referred to as Object Theatre. It is a sub-category of puppetry as is Shadow Theatre. In Shadow Theatre it is the reflected or projected image which is the agent of action (and not the silhouette from which it is projected). The agent has no material form and is not referred to as a puppet but has similar qualities in performance to a puppet. For this reason Shadow Theatre is referred to as puppetry. So in its broadest, contemporary use, the term puppetry indicates a theatre of animated images and does not necessarily include any puppets. While all puppetry includes some form of manipulation, not all of it simulates life. This is further discussed in the following section. Puppet theatre and puppetry involve the manipulation of objects and images, not simply the use of them.

The image in this context has two meanings. The first is the visual image, is that which is seen. It can be used even more specifically to indicate a two-dimensional image such as a projection. The theatrical image, on the other hand is more complex. It is the appearance of the elements of theatre as they exist in a particular moment. According to States, the image in theatre is a representation made from the materials of the medium in which he includes gesture, language, decor, sound and light (States, 1985: 24). The inclusion here of language and sound makes the image something

beyond the visual alone. It is perhaps closer to composition and includes the layering of all the given elements. So the theatrical image can be understood as the composite form in a given moment of theatre.

### Visual Theatre, a theatre of images

The School of Visual Theatre, in Israel, defines Visual Theatre as follows:

*Visual theater is one of the terms in which a creative act - performed for an audience or with its participation - may be described as an act the language of which is first and foremost that of visual images. This language is not limited to the creation of a visual image. □In its wider sense, it is a material, physical language that addresses all the senses and evokes mental images, a language in which every component - space, object, movement, voice or sound - may be equivalent to the actor and the human character. In contrast one may regard traditional theater based on the written drama, that is indeed presented visually but centralizes verbal discourse and its meanings.*

(Web:<http://www.visualtheater.co.il/visual.html>)

Visual Theatre is performance with objects or images in which the objects or images play an important and dynamic role. Clearly there is always a visual aspect to theatre. However, when the visual images are the dominant mode of expression it can be referred to as Visual Theatre. By 'dynamic' I mean the objects and images animate and/or are animated and that this is an integrated part of the performance. This would therefore exclude a performance with spectacular scenery and props but where all the development depends on the interaction of human performers. It would include, however, a performance in which the movement of scenery and props around the performance space is used as part of the central action, whether this is visual or dramatic. It would not include a performance in which a fragment of film is projected at some isolated point in the performance. However, it would include a performance



where projections are integrated into the action, where a relationship is developed between the image and the live action.

Visual Theatre works with a combination of elements such as sound, light, rhythm, visual metaphor, association rich objects, words, dynamics between performers and between performers and objects to create images in the minds of the perceiver. The overall effect is therefore not one of definition but rather of suggestion. Visual Theatre operates mainly in the realm of metaphor for the creation of meaning. Not only do the elements of the image relate to one another metaphorically (as a cross-referencing of experiential domains) but also, the internal experiential domains of the perceiver are brought into play with the image. The potentially multiple and ambiguous aspects of the theatrical image touch individuals in diverse ways. Fleishman talks about the relationship of theatrical image to metaphor:

*The image creates a thickness or concentration that enlightens in some kind of way or produces insight. The same thing happens linguistically with metaphor. The bringing together of two disparate elements in language to create a third meaning or to enhance the meaning of one of them. A concentration of elements in time thickens the one element... Because it is existing in the minds of the people watching it, it also comes into relationship at that moment with the context that that individual viewer brings and the perspective from which they view. There is a very rich process that happens in the course of an image transmission.*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

Contemporary Visual Theatre has emerged from an increasing interest in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in interdisciplinary artistic production. Theatre has often followed other art forms in transforming in line with contemporary thought. This is perhaps because it is a relatively cumbersome medium involving much collaborative procedure, or perhaps because of the nature of theatre audiences, their demands and the economic necessities required to appease them.

Theatre entered the arena of modernism on the heels of visual art. When Andre Antoine (actor and theatre theoretician of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century) demanded a new realism in theatre, his achievement

*... was at last to drag theatre into the nineteenth century, some ten years before it ended.*

*(Drain, 1995: 3)*

As modernist concerns in other art forms were in the grip of rapid transition, new explorations into the nature of theatre branched in several directions simultaneously (Drain, 1995: 3). Exemplary of the rebellious and exploratory spirit of modernism were the writings of Alfred Jarry and his Ubu creations. His use of puppetry in his staging and design corresponded directly to the anti-establishment spirit of his work. His interest was in moving away from illusion but through using both the dramatic text and expressive (rather than naturalistic) visual elements. Jarry describes the functioning of the mask as follows:

*By means of an enclosing mask, the actor should substitute for his head that of the character in effigy. This would not have, as in the antique world, the appearance of tears or laughter (which are not characters) but the character of the part: the Miser, the Hesitant One, the Covetous... Through all (the) incidental happenings the intrinsic expression subsists, and in many scenes the best thing is the impassivity of the mask as it dispenses its hilarious or solemn words. This can be compared only with the inorganic nature of the skeleton concealed under the flesh, whose tragicomic qualities have been recognised throughout the ages.*

*(Jarry, 1896 12)*

Theatre moved into a new form of realism where the visual design no longer set out to establish an alternative world of naturalistic and decorative illusion. Almost at the same time, theatre-makers such as Jarry began to explore the uniquely expressive potential of objects and images used in the theatrical context. The development of theatre that

moved away from representation was strongly influenced by the symbolists who saw theatre as a forum for the synthesis of the arts, poetry, painting, music, dance etc. (Drain, 1995: 3). Adolphe Appia, particularly influential in this development, sought a theatre that would use these mediums to form a complete artistic expression, concerned rather with a poetic capturing of human experience than with material concerns. He believed access to this was to be found via a break with the rigid staging and 'scenic illusion' of the past:

*...to transform our rigid and conventional staging practices into an artistic material, living, supple and fit to realise no matter what dramatic vision.*

*(Appia, 1904: 15)*

The highly influential theories of Edward Gordon Craig challenged theatre to develop a non-naturalistic aesthetic, which could use abstract and ritualistic elements to create spiritually significant works (Cambridge Guide to Theatre, 1988: 245). His theories proposed the artist as the ultimate controller of the artistic act and suggested that in theatre the director should be able to manipulate these elements to suit the desired expression. In the context of representational and naturalistic performance, he asserted that the actor or human 'material' is impossible to calculate and design. He proposed instead, the Uber-Marionette, to take the place of the actor:

*The uber-marionette will not compete with life-rather it will go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in trance- it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit.*

*(Craig, 1907: 84)*

Craig, whose theories were essentially symbolist in the emphasis of poetic vision and total design, emphasised the importance of the director and of the individual artistic

vision (Carlson, 1993: 302-304). The Symbolist's concern with poetic content was soon brushed aside by the futurist obsession with innovation and the machine age and by the Dadaist anarchic championing of chaos, parody and outrage. Futurist theatre worked to free scenography from the dramatic text and began to design productions based entirely on image and sound (Drain, 1995: 5).

In parallel, German Expressionism developed a two fold approach to promoting the importance of the subjective view: Der Brücke artists looked to use their work to communicate their angst-filled experience of pre World War 1 Germany, while Der Blaue-Reiter looked to art to speak to the transcendental in the human spirit. Theatrical Expressionism emerged during the war with the work of Hassenclever making a strong public impact (Drain, 1995: 6). This was driven by the new Western perspective on the nature of reality exemplified by Einstein's theory of relativity.

*The end of art is not to induce agreement but to shake foundations. More than ever, the task of the dramatist who grasps the world in its mobile state must be to win recognition on stage for the changed conception of its nature.*

*(Hassenclever, 1920: 31)*

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Asian theatre were having a significant impact on western forms. The introduction of the puppet into the same performance space as the live performers was influenced by Japanese Bonraku. However while this form of visible/ invisible manipulators introduced a new dynamic it still maintained an illusionist aesthetic (Paska 2000: 4). A performance of Balinese puppet theatre in Paris was to have a significant impact on the theories of Antonin Artaud.

Artaud, through his theories rather than practical work had a strong influence on the development of theatre in general and Visual Theatre in particular. Initially aligned to the Surrealist movement he was expelled by Andre Breton as he became committed to a political role for the movement (Carlson, 1993: 393). Although his

concern for the vehicle of expression was seen by some as a formalist (art for art's sake) concern, Artaud was in fact only interested in these formal elements in so far as they could create an experience for the spectator that would cause a reintegration of life itself (Carlson, 1993: 393). Artaud expressed frustration with the reliance on realistic text in theatre and the inadequacy of words to capture the inner experience of being human (Carlson, 1993: 394). He claimed that the theatre should use all means at its disposal to create an experience for the spectator of the dark, shadow or painful aspect of reality. This was not in order to produce some kind of integration or catharsis but to bring them to the fore and acknowledge their existence. His influence encouraged theatre-makers and directors away from a text-driven intellectual composition towards evoking a composite physical and ecstatic experience in the spectator. This was a distinct move from semiotics in which meaning is based in layers of signification, to phenomenology.

Brecht's theatre and criticism, developed out of German Expressionist thought. It aimed to use theatrical expression to communicate social realities. His work explored various techniques creating awareness in the audience of theatre experience as a constructed experience and, more importantly to him, of the 'sufferings of the masses' (Brecht, 1938: 188). His ideas had far-reaching effect for both the content and form of theatre. The work of Peter Schumann and the *Bread and Puppet* theatre can be seen as directly derivative of Brechtian principles. Coming to the fore in the 1960s with their anti-Vietnam street theatre, *Bread and Puppet* created experiences for both the participants and spectators through the use of giant imagery and collective expression. The impact of Schumann's work lies not so much in his simplistic political rhetoric or directorial style (in which he acts as dictator rather than the facilitator one might imagine) but in the immense power of the images he creates.

Strongly influenced by Cubism, Witkiewicz in Poland was exploring what he called a theatre of 'pure form', developed from the concept that art need not rely on 'reality' or on human experience and representation. The writings of Witkiewicz

capture Eastern European absurdism and were strongly influential in the development of the work of Tadeusz Kantor and eventually, the development of performance art (Drain, 1995: 7). With a group of visual artists, Kantor challenged conventions of space, character, text and time through creating theatre with found objects, and sculpted images in which actors were used as props and the text was only an element of the texture of the production (Eyre and Wright 2000: 365). Kantor developed a form of theatre that was non-linear in its logic, composed of and working through images and highly specific as an experience for the perceiver (Eyre and Wright 2000: 366). Kantor was strongly influenced by the European avant-garde art movements particularly Constructivism and Dada.

*For Kantor, the Dada object has proved more permanently disturbing than the dream image of Surrealism. The afterlife of junk, wreckage is another manifestation of death: things become themselves somewhere between the scrapheap and infinity.*

*(Hyde, 1990: 11)*

In the era of Modernism, it was often avant-garde artists and musicians who provoked a re-thinking of the nature of performance (Goldberg, 1998: 63). Richard Schechner in talking of the influence of Cage and the art performances (Futurism, Dada, Surrealist Automatism and Action Painting of Abstract Expressionism) suggests that:

*It was from the direction of music and painting that theatre was revolutionized.*

*(Schechner in Goldberg 1998: 63)*

However, many of the distinguishing characteristics of post-modernism (play of styles, pastiche, the celebration of artifice and more) were present in theatre long before they appeared in other art forms (Drain, 1995: 8).

*Live Art* of the 70's brought with it a form of confrontation with the spectator in acts of performance. Often body-centred and highly visceral, these performances challenged the notion of conscious construction and control, pulling relationships with real time and the physical body to the fore. Richard Foreman developed work which challenged the nature of performance through the combination of visual elements and random words and 'non-performance' elements (Marranca, 1999: 114). Foreman writes:

*Partly under the influence of French structuralists and poststructuralists I began to entertain the possibility that objects were simply crossroads for a multitude of inputs from the culture and from our unconscious.*

*(Foreman in Carlson, 1993: 512)*

On the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of control, Robert Wilson's work is equally reliant on a combination of visual and aural elements in the creation of a primarily sensory theatre (Carlson, 1993: 512). However while Foreman is interested in provoking conscious and intellectual reflection on experience, Wilson's focus is on validating the internal relationships created in the spectator's experience of the work.

Experimental puppetry in the '70's, associated with performance art, as well as the birth of object theatre at this time, provoked an explosion of exploration centred on multi-media and collaborative work (Paska, 2000: 4). Theatre DRAK, Figurenteatre Triangle and Joan Baixas were amongst the most influential of the Europeans working in this way.

Laurie Anderson, a performance artist who has moved into theatrical production, maintains the expressive visual media as the driving force in her work. Anderson wants to communicate so making contact with the perceiver is essential to her. This is a departure from the aims of live art, the Dadaists, futurists and Fluxus artists who tended to want to provoke and shock (Goldberg 2000:11). The tools

Anderson uses to make contact with people are words, projections, colours, sounds and music.

Huge ideas, transcendent and transcendental, dreamlike.

(Anderson in Goldberg, 2000:11)

As an audience member in *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick* (1999), one is sucked into enormous projected images, constantly transforming that leave one feeling underwater, almost drowning. The rich layering of associated words, sounds and colours defy logical understanding. Watching this work is an experience of being absorbed into a sea of meaning out of which only you can find your own way (Goldberg, 2000:19).

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century then, theatre forms and practitioners have continued to be strongly influenced by the visual arts. There has also been a movement towards integration of forms and interdisciplinary exploration. It is hardly surprising then that the boundaries between these forms are increasingly blurred. Objects and images are included in theatrical events and performances not only as a support to the traditionally primary elements of text and physical body, but as expressive devices in and of themselves. In the work of directors and performers such as Tadeusz Kantor, Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson and Robert Lepage (to name but a few) it is impossible to separate image from text in the reading of their work. Meaning is constructed not through linear narrative but through combinations and associations that create complex mental images which in turn relate to one another through time and space.

Visual Theatre brings the specific qualities of objects and images to the specific qualities of theatre. It extends the relationships that already exist in theatre by adding a third party to the performer-perceiver relationship. Visual Theatre is not a movement



or a proposal to use the visual exclusively in theatre but rather a way of delineating theatre that relies on the formation of images in the creation of meaning.

## **THE DYNAMICS OF METAPHOR IN VISUAL THEATRE**

### **Making metaphor and meaning: negotiating constructs in making Visual Theatre**

All theatre involves the making of meaning. Even absurdist or Dada works aim to create meaninglessness as a meaning. In Visual Theatre much of the meaning created is metaphorical. Extended metaphors involve the cross-mapping of experiential domains. In the constructed environment of theatre, there can be no reading of metaphor without a metaphor having been made either consciously or unconsciously. The processes of creating and of reading metaphor become inseparable as they are determined by one another. The making of these metaphors will involve a negotiation of the mental constructs from which they are created and will result in the product which is perceived.

In analysis of the interviews conducted for this study, three principal aspects of relationship between the theatrical product and the personal constructs of the theatre-maker(s) emerged. Firstly, the subject of the creation is brought into relationship with the theatre-maker's view on it. Secondly, if there is more than one person directly involved in the creation, a negotiation must take place concerning the subject and the way it is treated. Thirdly, the theatre-maker can choose to bring elements of her contextual reality (for example the socio-political and cultural) into the theatre and even create dialogue between them.

**The negotiation between theatre-maker and content:** The process of making theatre is one where the creators negotiate the relationships between theatrical entities and the meanings that are being created around them. The awareness in the theatre-maker that she is creating an illusion, a version or a view of something has her consciously engage with the constructs she brings to the creation process. This, in turn, affects the form the theatrical expression takes and then what is made available to the perceiver. In the creation process of *Dolos*, there was a period where there were no puppet characters on which the conflicting dynamics of self were centered. At a point in the process I had to confront this representation, and clarify my position in relation to the central concept of self. This led to the particular puppet bodies used in the production.

**The negotiation between theatre makers:** Within the creative collective of theatre-makers there is a constant process of meeting and encounter between constructs. Individuals involved in the process may or may not be personally responsible for the original impetus of creation but as they engage with the content of the work, their own constructs, meaning and resonances will be brought into play.

*People have to interact with each other in the making of theatre. There are processes that have to be played out and conflicts that have to be resolved or compromised on in order to get to where you need to be getting. In many senses the process of theatre is a model for life. ...[T]heatre itself... provides a platform for human interaction.*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

This 'platform' of interaction is described by Marx as a hyper-reality on a socio-cultural level, a bringing together of people and cultures who affect each other but, in everyday life, don't meet. So the negotiation in this context becomes about collective constructs as well as individual ones. Speaking about the intense interactive relationships of theatre-making, Marx says:

*The value of that in terms of our specific context is that it has provided me with the chance to work with people from other cultures in a very intense, focused and non-hierarchical process. In this sense the conversation opens up a separate reality. Whatever the product is, it comes from that process. ...There is the possibility there of creating true dialogue but also reflecting a kind of multi-vocal viewpoint, a societal voice in a sense.*

*(Marx, 2005)*

**Negotiating context:** Contextual awareness determines who theatre is made for as well as why and how it is made. This can be a personal or collective context, depending on the creator(s). The experience in the creator of her personal context or experience of life can be the determining factor. For Mark O'Donovan, making his work is about creating a parallel experience to the reality he perceives in the world:

*If I look at how the modern society is now...we are born into this world and this is the way it is and you just have to go along with it. ...You have to find a way to do it and you have to slot in to the way society has set it up. It's get up and go, time is your constraint. ...It's reality; it's the way it is. We are products of this great big machine and we are little puppets and we actually have to slot in. A lot of my work is about that. These machines are going and the people are just the manipulators for the objects. Their sole role is to make sure that the machine keeps running. ... Much like life.*

*(O' Donovan, 2005)*

O' Donovan creates this experience of pressure not only in the show but the creation of it. He works with what he calls 'forced creativity' where inventiveness is born out of time constraints. Odd Enginears' work is rehearsed over short periods with intense construction and heavy installation. The experience of pressure becomes a real one for the performers as they battle to keep up with the demands of the objects. The perceiver perceives this sense of pressure; it becomes the experience of the perceiver and performer alike. This phenomenological experiential aim is carried out through

metaphor, through the creation of action and image that are representative of pressure, becoming an experiential domain which is intended to map onto the experience of pressure in life.

The historical, political and social location of the self can influence the creator(s) in their choice of medium as well as their approach to it. Jones speaks about how the interactive and engaged nature of theatre directly influenced his move from fine art. He places strong importance on the political appropriateness of the work and its readability. Jones focuses on the readability of signs, aiming to create in theatre a more accessible system than he experienced in art-making:

*I was involved in a kind of Beuysian sculptural mindset, so it was installation pieces. I found that only about four people that I knew could respond to them. It was in the days of deep apartheid and rising political unrest and consciousness. I felt very isolated doing that kind of extremely exclusive work with very arcane sign systems. I was developing a kind of semiotics that was far too private... One of the things I really appreciate about the theatre is that the semiotics is a much more shared one. So it was ...more appropriate for the political process that we were going through.*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2005)*

In considering the context in which he sees himself making theatre, Fleishman speaks of his work as being motivated by a socio-political concern. He is also clear that the form his work takes is influenced by the cultural and aesthetic location he experiences himself being part of. This 'locating' of himself and his work, geographically, culturally and historically becomes part of the drive behind the work's content as well as its form including its cultural aesthetic. It is a search for location aimed to include the perceiver:

*There is a kind of ethical dimension involved in that the work is concerned with the immediate context that I find myself in, the world that I live in...there is a concern for people, human*

*beings, in that world. ...Clearly we live in a particular time, the time after apartheid. We are located in Africa, in Southern Africa; particularly we are located in Cape Town. All of those things are specific in some kind of way, which makes the work different from work being created in other places. I'm interested in the differences of Cape Town from the rest of the country, the fact that it doesn't necessarily fit into a traditionally or clichéd African paradigm. It is a crossing place of some kind; a place of meetings. ...In a broader sense there is the paradigm of difference, which is located in a sense of African culture and non-literary cultural forms. The non-literary nature of form means that there is scope for examining a less rigidly constructed aesthetic than a Western one. Obviously there is also the context of poverty, of political uncertainty that pervades the time.*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

The layering of this location is created in image in Fleishman's theatre as a metaphorical experience. *In Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints* (Magnet Theatre/Jazzart Dance Theatre, 2004), the structure of the piece was based on interacting time bands. The colonial period of Cape History was developed alongside images from the pre-colonial period and contemporary South Africa. These bands interacted in a form of non-linear collage of experiential domains, of the interrelationship of these times and the people who lived in them. The metaphors created in this work reflect the multidimensional and contextually driven concerns of its primary creator.

Looking at my own work from a contextual point of view, there is definitely an influence of and concern with the political uncertainty of which Fleishman speaks. Although it is provoked by the political instability of South Africa my work focuses on the individual uncertainty, an introspective questioning of identity. This is strongly influenced by the relationship to the social and political contexts in so far as they form an important part of the interior world. My interest in the profound uncertainty of existence is strongly culturally influenced by being a white, South African, of Scottish origin, living in Cape Town in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Adding to this, my personal interest in

Buddhism and practice of meditation, inform the way I approach theatre as well as the concerns I bring to it.

### **Reading Metaphor: the relationship of images in performance to the reality of the perceiver**

The perceiver's reality is touched by her engagement with the images and their contextual positioning within the performance. Engagement happens on several different levels, or domains of experience. These are the physical/experiential; the emotional and the conceptual/intellectual. As these domains of experience are perceived they are mapped into the internal experience (pre-existing in the mind of the perceiver), creating metaphor. All the domains of experience perceived are mutually co-dependant. Without the experiential the emotional cannot arise and so on. However it is useful to examine them separately in the interests of understanding the complex response in the perceiver.

**Physical/experiential engagement:** Fleishman talks about creating intense moments of experience for the perceiver:

*Image is a cluster made up of visual, aural, ideological or conceptual things that coalesce to make something, a very concentrated experience in time. Theatre, for me, is made up of many of these concentrated moments and they relate to each other in different ways...It's a more visceral experience than a necessarily intellectual one... .*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

Introducing physical objects and images to theatre creates a resonance with the physical world and our own physical bodies in relation to it. Because physical objects and bodies appear to have independent existence, their existence as real in our internal

worlds is very powerful. They are strongly linked to associations of time, place and function. These associations become like keys into the minds of the perceivers. They may be re-formed there in relation to their newly revealed qualities and/or they can create an awareness of the narratives we create around our physical environment. In bringing familiar objects, actions and interactions into the heightened reality of theatre, attention is drawn to these things in a new way. The actions surrounding objects (or visa versa) can be extended, creating a de-familiarization with, and therefore a questioning of the 'use-value'. This has the potential to expand the perceiver's experience of these apparently familiar aspects of her reality. Marx discusses the physicality of objects, in theatre, relating to their internal constructs:

*In theatre there is a direct interaction of presence between the audience and the thing that's in front of them ... what fascinates me is the use of objects in terms of questioning, altering, intervening with etc the relationship between people and things and their environment... What fascinates me is that interaction between the sensual or perceptual and the conceptual, the process by which according to phenomenology, something is covered and veiled with our associations of it.... So for theatre to open up this relationship also implies that we have to open up the sensual experience, and that we have to contradict those definitions and namings that use-value gives to things...*

*(Marx, 2005)*

**Emotional engagement:** Because of the element of narrative the perceiver may become emotionally and/or intellectually involved in the play-off between created dynamics in theatre. My own interest lies in creating relationships between people and aspects of themselves. This is not only about the complexity of emotional and intellectual response to circumstances but rather the complex response to the 'self' as a conceptual construct. Theatre allows for the creation of scenarios where this complexity can be explored and played out for the perceiver

**Intellectual engagement:** O'Donovan is interested in curiosity, in engaging the imaginative and conceptual mind of the perceiver. He does this by working with the familiar and unfamiliar, creating unusual relationships and unexpected developments. He talks about seeing and creating the unexpected:

*I want them (the perceiver) to be interested and curious, like: 'How does that work? What happened there?' They work it out and see that it's quite simple, or quite clever. That it is simple things put together in a clever way. It's about triggering the imagination.*

*(O'Donovan, 2005)*

Theatre, created to cause meanings and associations, may become a parallel experience to the narratives created in life. The process of creating associations, meanings and readings is continuous in the everyday world but mostly we are not consciously aware of it. Theatre positions elements in relationship to one another with the intent that the perceiver engages with these elements at some level and creates relationships between them. However, because the perceiver is always aware at some level that the context is fictitious, there is a degree of conscious insight into the construction of these narratives. This awareness can create a consciousness in the perceiver of her subjectivity, not only in the moment but elsewhere in her experience of reality.

## **THE METAPHORICAL POTENTIAL OF OBJECTS IN THEATRE**

The object in theatre is essentially different from the performer in theatre in that it cannot 'act'. The object cannot behave like or become anything other than what it is because by nature it is inanimate. Objects may be made to look like something recognisable but they remain a clear representation of that thing or person. In the context of theatre and performance objects bring with them strong metaphorical associations. Many of these are related to the tension between the inanimate object and



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the qualities of life it evokes as well as the contemporary use of live performers in relationship with puppets.

*Adding to the absorption of the puppeteer into this fictional universe, the variety of manipulation techniques...adds another level in the complexity of representation. It is thus that contemporary puppet theatre often appears as a field of simultaneous tensions between different levels of existence... .*

*(Plassard, 2002:12, my translation)*

In the chapter *High-Wire Acts* of her book *Puppetry and Puppets*, Eileen Blumenthal looks at different ways in which illusion is created and broken.

*All theatre engages its viewers in a double reality. ...This double vision...is part of the pleasure of live theatre. In puppet theatre this so-called "willing suspension of disbelief" becomes a high-wire act as the gap between normal reality and stage truth becomes a chasm.*

*(Blumenthal, 2005:71)*

The theoretical approach of the section below is semiotic. It looks at the dynamics set up in the manipulation of puppets and what these may signify. However, it should be understood in the context of this paper as simply one aspect of the impact of objects and images in theatre. The total theatrical image can change absolutely the connotations that may have been implied by one performance element. This is not to say that the conclusions drawn are invalid but that they should be read as suggested connotations that could be relevant to different productions using objects and /or puppets in a given way. Given the philosophical frame of this paper, that perceptions (and experiential domains) are individually created and only real in the mind creating them, it may seem absurd to define even possible metaphorical connotations. However, in the relative domain of relational dynamics, trends and patterns can be observed. These are

important in so far as they inform the individual mind but they do not represent the truth.

### **The object-puppet's autonomy and the illusion of life**

The puppet is an object to which the puppeteer gives impetus, life or force. This is a transfer of energy. Simple movement in the object comes to represent motivation when in fact it is only movement given by the power of another body. The puppet object is inert and so vulnerable to the force and will of the puppeteer. The puppeteer transforms the inertia of the puppet into movement and thus transforms its energy. This is manipulation.

If the movement, given to the object by the performer, gives the object a quality of autonomy, the illusion is created that the object is moving and not being moved. A tea saucer can, in this way, appear to be a flying saucer. The 'flying saucer' appears to fly due to the rhythm of movement given to it by the performer. This rhythm will be related to the way something flies as opposed to the way a person holds and moves a saucer. It is this differentiation in rhythm of movement, which gives autonomy to the object. The more precisely the movement of the object (in this example the tea saucer) reflects that of the thing it is imitating (the flying saucer) the more complete the illusion will be. It will then have a quality of movement which represents a force, which is not its own but gives the illusion of being so.

In addition to this, the performer can move the object in a way that indicates the presence of consciousness. When this is done, the object is given a movement pattern that corresponds to the movement of something that possesses motivation. This 'consciousness', combined often (but not always) with an indication of the presence of breath, will give the object 'life'. It is, in fact, an object being made to imitate, in its movement, the qualities of a living thing. Through moving the object as if it has a will

(the object wants to move, to go somewhere or do something), senses (the object sees, hears, feels, smells etc) and/or perception (the object realizes something or experiences something emotionally), the object 'comes to life'. In giving the object movements that the perceiver can identify as 'signs of life', the puppeteer creates an illusion of the object being alive.

In order to sustain the credibility of the 'independently moving' or 'living' object a rhythm of movement particular to that object must be established and maintained. The flying saucer may move quickly in straight lines and then 'hover' on the spot. Similarly, a 'living' character is established principally through imitating breathing and the senses. This movement, once established, must be maintained or broken only inside of what we can relate to as possible for that thing or character. This is tightly related to the perceived possible magnitude of movement within the given universe or reality of the illusion. This is a plausible illusion that operates according to an established set of rules.

The illusion may be further extended through the use of voice. If the object is used as a character, the performer may give it a voice. The object may appear to speak which extends it's potential for conscious reaction and interaction.

Once these illusions have been established, the perceiver may become involved in the fate of the puppet character and/or independently motivated object (the flying saucer). The perceiver will follow the narrative into a world in which these objects are characters and will believe in this 'reality' for the character. All the while, most adult perceivers will remain conscious intellectually that the puppet character is just an object and that the everyday object (the tea saucer) being used as something else (flying saucer) is still an everyday object (a tea saucer). If the illusions created are convincing or arresting, people will chose to believe in them even though they know they are not reality. This is known as the willing suspension of disbelief.

When certain key visual elements are in place and when these are combined with some coherent movement, the perceiver will begin to invest an energy of her own

in the object. She will form her own connections and even begin to elaborate on the physical forms. Adrian Kohler talks about this in peoples' response to the giraffe from *Tall Horse (Handspring Puppet Co and Sogolon 2004)*:

*Because just an ear twitch, which is fairly mechanical, shows somehow the thought of the giraffe, in showing that the giraffe thinks, the perceiver can then think that there are other aspects which are not being shown. ...They embroider. As soon as they begin to trust you, that you have gone some of the way, they'll believe in it.*

Jones adds:

*They'll say 'how did you make the eyes move' really believing that they saw them move but it's a glass bead.*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2005)*

The visible presence of the puppeteer acts as a reminder that the object is in fact an object. When the manipulator is not visible the tension between these two forces (the illusion of life and the constructed nature of this illusion), decreases. The life force established in the object is fragile. Its tension is held inside of the play between this illusion and the real independence of the object and manipulator. Any change in the quality of the life force of the object, which is out of the character of the life force which has been established, either in its rhythm or in the puppeteer's relationship to it, becomes a contradiction to the illusion of the autonomy of the object.

The perceiver is constantly aware of this double force at play. There is a sense of fragility in the illusion as the life force seemed to have come from nowhere, can be easily destroyed and yet appears to exist. This is often captivating as the involved perceiver is aware of the illusion and wants it to survive. Whether or not the choice is made by the performers or director to break the illusion, the perceiver is aware that it

can be broken. This is the initiation of the question of power to be further discussed below.

The illusion of life can also be developed into a playful relationship with the perceiver. In *Dolos* when the puppets are at the restaurant, Paul orders wine. When it arrives he sniffs it, sips, hesitates and nods. The audience laughs every time. What they are laughing at is the inanimate object making a conscious choice. They notice, at this moment, the impossibility of the situation. There is also possibly a reflection on themselves making a similar choice, provoking the resonance of recognition.

### **Projected image and illusion**

The projected image is layered with illusion. The original source of the image is not necessarily present. The image may be a selected view of the object or place the object in a context where it has never physically been. Even when the object from which the image is taken is present and/or the image is formed manually during the live performance, the image is an illusion. The image that the perceiver sees does not exist as a physical object. It resembles the source from which it is taken but it is nothing more than a play of light on a surface. An illusion of depth may be created but this too is illusion.

Projected video images appear to move by themselves and appear to exist in entirely self-contained realities. The perceiver is willing and accustomed to suspending her disbelief in the presence of this medium (film). The illusion goes so far as to adhere closely to the naturalistic world and to appear to be an exact replica of it and of things moving in it. Signs of the mechanical and constructed nature of these images are often carefully hidden.

In the context of live theatre, however, these signs may be shown in order to reference this construction. Where the source of the image is seen as well as the image (as in live video) the spectator can directly experience framing or image selection. If the surface onto which it is projected is textured, creased, unusual or moves, the perceiver may become aware of the mechanics of projection and the illusion of depth. If (as in Shadow Theatre) the movement of the image or object in front of the light source is uneven or manual this will further break the illusion. Similarly, if the perceiver sees the light source, the physical reality of projection will become apparent. In other words, where the presence of a live performer influences the image, the reality of the projection will be highlighted. In *tenZone* (Odd Enginears, 2004) an image is projected using an adapted slide projector. The projector is seen and the person operating it is a performer. The actual image is laid out in frames like an animation and rolled like film. However, the movement of the image in front of the light source is far too slow to create the illusion of things moving. Instead the images follow each other in progression like slides showing the frames from an animation. In the background, the soundtrack of the television show *Dallas* is plonked out on a mini organ and another performer watches the images and eats popcorn. Clearly this is referencing the production of images and their constructed and illusionist nature as well as their mass consumption.

### **The object-performer relationship**

*A general characteristic of contemporary puppet theatre could be said to be the multiple forms of representation of the human figure on stage. Starting with the discovery of Bonraku, Western theatre has begun to use this technique of double scenic presence. However, unlike Bonraku where the manipulators have a discreet presence, in contemporary theatre they play parts sometimes equal to the figures they manipulate.*

*(Plassard 2002: 12 my translation)*

In order to discuss the power relationships between the object and the performer, it is necessary to define the different relationships between the two. In this section I will look at what the particular relationships are, and in the following one I will explore the possible metaphorical implications of these relationships. I have defined five principal forms of manipulation: illusionist manipulation; neutral, visible manipulation; expressive, visible manipulation; characterised manipulation and interactive manipulation.

**Illusionist manipulation:** The first category is one where the performer is hidden and only the object is visible. This is typically accomplished through the use of a physical barrier of some kind (such as a miniature theatre or a screen) or through the use of light (objects appear in a tight corridor of light for 'black theatre' or using a Black Light to pick up only light objects). In this category, the controlling mechanisms such as rods, strings or even hands are disguised as far as possible. If the puppet 'speaks', the voice of the performer is adapted to suit the size and character of the puppet. The performer will project her voice through the puppet, to give the impression that the voice comes from the object itself. This will be referred to as *illusionist manipulation* as there is an attempt to create a complete illusion that the object is moving independently of any outside force.

In *Elise's Adventures in Congoland*, (Sogo Theatre, 2004), most of the shadow projection is a form of *illusionist manipulation*, as a screen hides the performers from public view. The puppet character appears to enter another world and is subject to its rules. The illusion is created that she is moving through a foreign landscape and encountering people there. However, the graphic, two-dimensional quality of the shadow figures prevents the image from appearing to be 'real' and creates, rather, a clearly fictitious reality. Since the performers have already been present and since the image is not smoothly controlled, the illusion is incomplete. In *Tall Horse*, (Handspring



and Sogolon Puppet Companies, 2004), the large Pasha figure is, in its first appearance, an example of *illusionist manipulation*. The principal manipulator is hidden completely inside the body of the puppet. The voice is resonant, deep and booming, which suits the character. Here too, however, the illusion is slightly disturbed by the hands, which are controlled by visible performers.

*Illusionist manipulation* is most often, but not always, used to create life in the objects of performance. In *Dolos* the shadow images are illusionist in that their controllers and light sources are hidden, however they are not used to create life in themselves. The perceivers are not expected to believe the figures on screen have an independent life but are rather to read them as images that are occurring in the minds of the puppets and their manipulators.

**Neutral, visible manipulation:** In the second form of manipulation, the performer is visible but doesn't play an independent role and remains a neutral force behind the object. The performer will, in this case, often be dressed in black or a colour which blends with the background and which will attract as little attention to her body as possible. The performer moves with the object and maintains physical calm while giving the object all the vitality of the character or movement. The performer will maintain relatively discreet facial expressions as the focus is contained in the movement of the object. The voice will be used as it is in *illusionist manipulation* or, in order to maintain the neutrality of the performer's presence, it may be recorded or spoken by another performer. This will be referred to as the *neutral, visible manipulation* technique.

In *Dolos*, from the moment the manipulators take hold of the puppets until they remove their hoods, *neutral, visible manipulation* is used. The puppets appear to be thinking and acting of their own accord with these black shadowy figures behind them. Clearly the perceiver *knows* that the manipulators are creating the movement. However, because of the neutrality of these figures, they forget to focus on this fact and

become involved with the life of the puppets. In *Tall Horse*, the giant giraffe is an example of *neutral, visible manipulation*. The manipulators can be seen but have no presence of their own. All their energy is fed into the giraffe, to give it life.

**Expressive, visible manipulation:** The third form of manipulation is similar to the second in that the performer is visible but different in that she is now expressively involved. In other words, the performer will allow her body to reflect expressions related to what the object is doing. For example, the performer may speak the puppet character's lines and if the puppet is angry the performer's face will express anger. The voice of the puppet may be a caricature or reduced to the puppet's size but is not necessarily. The performer may use a slight adaptation of her own voice to convey 'real' human emotion, much as when performing the part of any character. This voice may not appear to suit the puppet and so acts as a reminder of the construction of the puppet's character and the performer's relationship to it. This will be referred to as *expressive, visible manipulation*. Most of the human character puppets in *Tall Horse* are manipulated using this technique. There is no attempt to hide the performer or to keep expressions neutral. Rather, the manipulators' facial expressions feed our understanding of the puppet characters' emotions. In *The Fire Raisers* (Magnet Theatre, 2004), both the puppets and the manipulators become firemen. They are not independent characters but rather supporting and co-dependant forces. The puppets add a layer of symbolic meaning to the concept of firemen while the performers anchor the puppets in the realm of the human.

**Characterised manipulation:** In the fourth form, the performer plays a separate role to the object. The performer takes on a role, independent of the object, which is related to, or continuous with, her role as manipulator. This form is typically combined with *neutral, visible manipulation* or *expressive, visible manipulation*. The performer will have a certain role in the performance and, at a given moment, will take up an object

and manipulate it. She may 'melt' into the object and may or may not return to her previous role. Alternatively, at a given moment in a performance, the performer may leave the object that she has been manipulating and play a role either as herself or as another character. The performer may, also in this category, never leave her character and simply move the object(s) in character. The performer's character could also manipulate several different objects or object-characters. Here, it is likely that the performer will choose to distinguish between what is her own character's voice and the voice of the puppet. However, if the puppet character is an aspect of the same character as played live by the performer, the voices may be similar or the same. This form will be referred to as *characterised manipulation*.

The character Elise in *Elise's Adventures*, is an example of *characterised* and *expressive, visible manipulation* combined. The performer plays the part of a character independently of the puppet, in this case, as the same character. When she picks up the puppet, the puppet becomes the character and she manipulates it expressively. However since the performer has already been introduced as Elise, when she manipulates the puppet Elise, the perceiver is slightly aware of a double Elise, or two different aspects of the same character.

In *tenZone*, a conscious attempt is made by the performers not to develop character as such. However, given the fabricated nature of the environment and activities, the performers do play a role as themselves in reaction to the circumstances. The performer does not demonstrate emotions. He or she does what needs to be done and the real emotions experienced in the doing become the indicators of character to the perceiver. This is an example of *characterised manipulation* as the performers, as the subjects of the action, represent human character.

From the first moments of *Dolos*, the manipulators are defined as forces independent from the puppets. Their characters are hinted at during the game of poker but they melt back into the puppets as they take hold of them. Fragments of their independent characters show through during the restaurant scene but it is only when

their hoods come off that they are revealed as characters. They are independent characters but are all part of the puppets' characters. They remain close to the puppet and their movements are related but not identical.

**Interactive manipulation:** The fifth category of manipulation is where the performer develops a relationship with the object and the two interact. The performer plays an independent role to the object, either as herself, as a puppeteer or as another character. This is similar to *characterised manipulation*, the principal difference being that here the performer and the object's actions act on and affect one another. This may take the form of a puppet character interacting with the performer's character. The puppet or object character may become conscious of the performer and/or the performer's character. The performer will stay consistently close to her role as character even while manipulating the puppet. In this form it is vital that one character's voice is distinct from another. The performer may fabricate a distorted voice for the puppet while using something close to her own voice for the character that she plays. When the two interact there has to be a clear distinction between them so that the perceiver does not have to wonder which character is speaking. This will be referred to as *interactive manipulation*. A distinct moment of *interactive manipulation* in *Tall Horse* occurs when the French tailor, frustrated with his entourage, tells them to leave. One of the manipulators immediately drops his hand and the puppet character says, with complete disdain: "Not *you!*". While most examples of interactive manipulation are not illusionist, ventriloquist acts are highly illusionist as the complete independence of the puppet character is maintained while it apparently interacts with the manipulator.

## The relationship between projected image and action

The projected image is, at base, a moving image in front of a light source. The image is either digital, printed on a transparent surface (film, acetate or slide film), or an actual physical object. If the projection is from objects, as with shadow, the same techniques of manipulation as for on-stage objects apply. Here, however, it is not only with the actual object that the performer can interact but also with the shadow. In the case of video and digitally projected images, I stated earlier that in order for these to fall into a broad definition of Visual Theatre, an interactive relationship must be established between the image and the live action. That is to say, a relationship must be established in which the two entities' actions directly affect each other in some way. With projected images, this interaction is possible through several different means.

The first of these is the way images are projected. What is used for the projection is of primary concern here. Light sources can vary from firelight (used traditionally in Thailand and Indonesia), to a naked bulb, the halogen 'wand' of contemporary shadow theatre, to various forms of projector (slide, overhead, digital video etc.). Where the light source is located (part of the performance space or at a distance, visible or invisible to the perceiver). Whether it is used as a mobile object itself (as in the case of moving light sources in Shadow Theatre), and whether it relates visually to the scenic objects. In *tenZone* the projector clearly fits into what Mark O'Donovan (director) describes as the "rudimentary mechanics and 'off the shelf' technology" of Odd Enjineer work (*National Arts Festival Souvenir Programme, 2004: 122*). The principle of exposed workings is one maintained throughout the show.

The second consideration is the surface onto which the image is projected (a screen, the floor, the ceiling, the performers, other scenic objects). Whether this surface arises out of the action and whether its presence is integrated conceptually and visually will affect its presence with the performers. The surface for the projected

image in *tenZone* is a bed sheet. In the first version of the piece, this sheet was washed and hung out on a line by the character who watches the projection/TV/slide show. In later versions it is already in place but tied up. It is always creased and uneven, further underlining the constructed nature of the projection.

The third consideration is around the source of the projected image. How the image is created including what the original object(s) is/are of which the footage is taken, when it is taken and how. Live footage taken in front of the perceiver clearly represents an interaction between the video image and the live action. Also important, however, is what the image represents. Action taking place in the performance itself, objects present in the performance or representations of characters present in the performance could all represent an interaction depending on how they are handled.

In *Elise's Adventures*, the character Elise decides to make a documentary. As she makes it, the puppets are filmed and the image projected live onto the screen. On the screen the perceiver sees what the puppet selects as an image (clearly inside the puppet's reality) and at the same time is aware of the three dimensional performance which conveys different information. These two realities interact with each other in the mind of the perceiver.

Live video feed is also used in *Rain In a Dead Man's Footprints* towards the end when the time zones are interacting and collapsing. In this context, the capturing of images refers symbolically to the reinvestigation and even sensationalising of the past that is so much part of the present world. Once again it is only fragments that are captured by the camera while the vast majority passes by outside the framed shot as do the most vital aspects of many cultures. In the context of this work this view on history is poignant, as the culture of which it is speaking has all but vanished.

So interaction is also achieved through the type of the projected image. Video does not carry the same feeling as shadow and live video is, as discussed above, something very particular. In *Tall Horse*, the images are minimal and clearly digitised. The reduced green lines of the projection pass quiet visual commentary on the scenic

action. This relates to the theme of analysis and categorization that runs throughout the piece.

In *Dolos*, the choice of shadow for the images that represent dreams and daytime nightmares is related to the quality of these projections. They are by nature unstable and graphic. They are simplified images that can transform and blend into each other. They represent familiar forms but are not always exactly recognizable. They do not have to follow the physical and spatial logic of three-dimensional objects so they can change shape and size. These are all qualities that I feel relates them to the world of mental images.

The final consideration in the interaction between image and live action is how the live action is affected by the image. If a projected image affects the movement of a performer or performing object, or visa versa, interaction is taking place. In *Elise's Adventures*, as Elise becomes dizzy and her perception distorted, the camera and therefore the projected image move in a way which reflects her state-of-mind. This reinforces the connection between the projected image and the character's limited view of her reality. In *Dolos*, as images of Carol drift across the screen, Paul slows down his polishing and even begins to drift into the air. The images that are inside Paul's mind affect the quality of movement of the puppet. Seeing Mutt alone in a spotlight scratching at a door sends the puppet character into a panic and sets off his defensive concerns about commitment.

### **Power and its metaphorical connotations**

In each form of relationship and performance with objects there are several possible connotations and levels of implied meaning. Which one comes to the fore will depend on how the form is used, in what context and what the general content of the

performance is. In this section I will discuss some of the more immediate connotations, which are associated with the particular form.

**Connotations of illusionist manipulation:** When the *illusionist manipulation* technique is used, the object is given the illusion of life; set up as 'alive'. In this case the 'rule' is established that the illusion must be maintained for the success of the character and performance. This requires a high degree of precision from the performer who becomes like a slave to the rules of the illusion. The perceiver will, however, rarely be conscious of the performer with *illusionist manipulation*, as the performer is not seen.

This form will bring up strongly the suspension of disbelief. If the illusion is convincing, the spectator will suspend her critical mind and follow the progression of the illusion. The rules of the physical world will not be expected to apply in the same way to the performing objects. As the spectator watches and is drawn into the illusion so she allows her mind to play in a non-concrete reality and will enter a world where anything is possible. Anything, that is, which is plausible according to the established rules of that world. This associates strongly with the subconscious aspects of our selves and our non-physical perceptions of reality. The images will therefore often have connotations of dream states, hallucinations, nightmares, imaginings, projections and fantasy.

Depending on the content and type of image, this form can also speak strongly of allegorical and mythological interpretations of reality. Myth and allegory are story interpretations of world-views. *Illusionist manipulation*, like myth, legend and allegory, can be constructed to parallel the inexplicable.

If, however, *illusionist manipulation* is used (intentionally) without creating a seamless illusion, the perceiver will be aware of the presence of the performer and is unlikely to enter into the illusion completely. In this case, the performance may have connotations of the frailty of human effort, the constructed nature of the reality we live in (as the puppets 'believe' in their own reality) or our limited world-view. In the



shadow sequence in *Elise*, the character enters an illusory world where she encounters her own perceptions of Africa and is affected by them. This is either a journey made inside of herself (a dream or personal questioning) or into some other dimension, the choice being left to each perceiver.

In all of the *visible manipulation* techniques, by definition, the method of manipulation is exposed. This allows for two principal power relationships: either the performer is controlling the object, or the object is seen to control the performer. The metaphorical connotations of these are enormously different and depend on many factors including the form and scale of the objects, whether or not the performer plays a character, whether or not there is interaction and the rhythm of the action.

Where the controlling force is the performer there is a sense of natural logic (the object can only perform when controlled by the performer), which may or may not be called into question. The more attention is drawn to this relationship, the more clearly the metaphorical connotations will emerge.

**Connotations of neutral, visible manipulation:** in this form, the performer is a presence or force behind the object. The performer appears to follow the object, at one with it and yet separate. Where the objects imitate life, this may have the effect of a visible invisible presence, a guide, a shadow or a life-force. There is a clear sense that the puppets and therefore by extension humans, are controlled by something undefined of which they are unaware. In *Dolos* this dynamic is developed in the early parts of the play where the perceiver is expected to believe in the world of the puppets and their independent aliveness in it. The puppets are completely unaware of their manipulators throughout most of the play and in the early parts their presence as forces with intention is only slightly hinted at. While the puppets are clearly controlled by the black figures behind them, the nature of that control remains undisclosed until later. What this allows for is that the puppets can be established as two integrated entities, 'normal' people with 'normal' lives, while hinting at something more waiting to

emerge. Because the puppets are not in fact human, the illusion of this normality is already suggested by the form it is captured in. While on some level the actors are completely controlling the puppets, because of the necessity of maintaining this illusion, the control can be seen to run the other way. It is the part of the play where the puppets (the characters' conscious concept of themselves) are most in control and where the manipulators work almost exclusively to serve the needs of these puppet bodies.

*Neutral, visible manipulation* was used by Handspring in *Episodes of an Easter Rising* (Handspring Puppet Co., 1985). Kohler speaks about the unexpected metaphoric meaning created in this show where the manipulators were exposed for the first time:

*We expected the audience to simply blank them out... . The accident that happened there was that the audience didn't blank them out, they took on a different kind of meaning. They became guardians of the characters, part of their destiny, an outer force.*

*(Kohler and Jones, 2005)*

**Connotations of expressive, visible manipulation:** Here the human qualities of the object are developed through the performer. While the emotion may become more real for the perceiver, there is also an acknowledgement of the limited nature of the object in this form. In *The Fire Raisers*, the puppets represent the inability of the firemen to definitively intervene in the city. They are the de-humanised and disempowered of the city and it is the puppets that symbolically capture this. At the same time they have hopes and aspirations, a will to change the situation and prevent the disaster they see impending. This human hopefulness is captured in the manipulator's presence and facial expressions. In *tenZone*, the 'boss' puppet progressively loses control of the whole situation, and as the action mounts, he is handled increasingly carelessly by his manipulator until he is thrown/jumps from the tower. The manipulator is not an

independent character but the way in which he handles the puppet clearly informs the experience of the puppet until the puppet character loses control altogether.

**Connotations of characterised manipulation:** The sense of humans being controlled is developed in *characterised manipulation*. However, in this case, the controlling force becomes defined. This brings in intent. Something or someone specific is controlling something or someone else. Why this is taking place will be developed as part of the plot. In *Tall Horse*, the people working in the museum storehouse begin to manipulate the objects as the character (who is searching for his ancestor) falls back in time and becomes this ancestor. There is a sense, in part because he eats the mummy's finger that they give him, that they are creating this experience for him. This is also strongly created by the fact that they manipulate all the objects that surround the unfolding of his experience. In *Dolos*, as the manipulators emerge as characters, the perceiver begins to see the influence they have on the actions of the puppet. When the character Critical Bitch grabs the puppet's principal control -from Whiner, the puppet's movement and words reflect her attitude. While the manipulators are in conflict with one another the fact that they are all part of the same character sets up the dynamic of conflict as an internal one. It becomes about dominating characteristics within an individual person. Because in characterised manipulation the manipulator is never fully independent from the puppet, when the manipulators move away from the puppet physically, a particular tension is set up. In the scene of the 'chicken nightmare' at the end of the kitchen sequence in *Dolos*, Carol's manipulators move quite far from her and even begin to attack her. This does not represent a loss of power as it might do, but rather their increasingly independent power over her and a loss of sense of self for the character as a whole.

**Connotations of interactive manipulation:** Here the puppet interacts with the controlling force and may even become 'aware' that it is being controlled. This will

bring to mind changing states of consciousness, the human capacity to realize how we function and our dependence on forces that control us. In the case of the tailor in *Tall Horse*, the moment of recognition by the puppet of his manipulators is humorous as it plays on the reality of the puppet's dependence on the performers and on the perceiver's pre-existing knowledge of this dependence. In this moment, the illusion recognises itself which is surprising. While this may seem to break the illusion, it in fact reinforces the life in the object as it expresses 'awareness' of its own limitations.

Where the controlling force appears to be the object, the internal logic of the relationship is reversed. This is complex to establish. If the object is given certain characteristic ways of moving, an illusion may be created. If the manipulator chooses to maintain the illusion that has been created in the object, certain rhythms, reactions and behaviours become necessary in the object's movement. These are established as a pattern and the manipulator is forced (through the choice to protect the illusion) to maintain these behaviours. As this falls into place the manipulator may be perceived as being controlled by the object or by the rules of movement that the object has come to represent. The performer is vulnerable to the momentum established in the object, vulnerable to the construction that has been created and so to a constructed reality. If the performer is seen to struggle to do what has become necessary, the perceiver will become aware of this reversal in control. This is achieved particularly through pace and space. Rapidly moving objects within a large area are clearly more likely to dominate the performer than objects with slow, careful movements within a contained space. Depending on these factors and the scale of the objects, the perceived vulnerability of the performer can be established.

Odd Enjinear performances are developed principally through free association and the internal and mechanical logic of actions. That is to say, movement and actions of performers and objects are determined principally by what they need to do or where they need to be, not by any innate significance in their movement or arrival. Working with certain established structural elements (such as the scaffolding and sound-

making machines) as well as with pre-rehearsed phrases of music and short sequences of action, each show is developed on site in a relatively short time. The preparation of the performance relies almost entirely on the objects and constructions. Time is spent building things and working out how to make them work. The creation is one in which both the perceiver and the performers have a 'real' experience of the functioning of these objects. The objects and the necessity to make them function, determine the movement of the performer. The performers are under pressure and the urgency of their actions is real. These dynamics, combined with the scale of the constructions, make the objects dominant over the performers.

If the performer(s) are seen to be uncomfortable, unhappy or distressed, their apparent loss of control will bring to mind effort, the human struggle to keep a grip on things. Where the objects are clearly objects, the situation will speak of a de-humanized world, the machine age, object-dominated realities and the individual's ingestion into 'the system' (often talked about as a machine). In other words, these power relationships, in which the objects dominate and are seen to be objects, will usually speak of negative human relationships with a dominant external reality. In Odd Enjinears performances, trapped in the necessary activity, the performers use minimal specified characterisation and so speak of the general condition of being caught in circumstances. This dominance of the real object is an important element in the dynamic energy of O'Donovan's work:

*[When the performer gets into a difficult position]...that's when theatre becomes very interesting. I like to work with constraints. ...Depending on how you solve (a problem) as a performer, the audience should feel the tension and the relief. For my own work I don't like mime. It's pretence like 'lets pretend there's an object in my way.' I don't like that. I think when there is really an object in the way, how you deal with it is great theatre. When things go wrong, how you solve it is great theatre.*

*(O'Donovan, 2005)*

A combination of *interactive* and *illusionist manipulation* will often be used where the object(s) are manipulated to imitate a life form that interacts with and dominates performers. In order to give the power of the puppet credibility, it will often be as large or larger than the performer(s). As humans we are generally resistant to the idea of some other form of life being capable of controlling us, so where the puppets are malevolent life-forms they will often represent things we fear such as fictive monsters or wild beasts. We also place ourselves at the source of such life forms in which case there will be suggestions of mutation or some scientific experiment gone wrong. This is not always the case as large dominant puppets can also be benevolent. The Pasha in *Tall Horse* is such an example. Looming huge out of history, this powerful figure gently dominates the performers who manipulate his hands. The illusionist manipulation of the head and torso of the figure give the object a quality of independent presence, while the small figures of the live performers in his lap bring to the fore his dominance and control of the situation.

### **The associations created by the form of objects and images in theatre**

While the theatre itself is a functional space, the activity of performance is not functional *per se*. The space of performance is one in which anything entering it serves the performance. As such, it is not a functional or natural environment but a constructed one. Even where performance is site-specific, the fact that a performance is taking place, as a performance, makes the situation a constructed one. Any object or performer entering this space, for the purpose of the performance, represents a choice and therefore a construct. Whether constructed or found, all objects, used dynamically in performance, have metaphorical connotations. Because the form of these metaphors

is visual, they are often not literally interpretable. Visual metaphors rely on loose associations and therefore make multiple interpretations and resonances possible.

The resonance created by these metaphors is unpredictable. Our interaction with our environment happens at many different levels. Although we are not always aware of it happening, we are continuously responding to visual stimuli. Unless we have realised and conceptualised (formed in language) our response to a visual stimulus, we may not understand the logic of our own response. This doesn't make the effect any less powerful but perhaps not as comfortable. A lack of comfort is often caused by an absence of certainty. This can be constructively used as the impact of objects and images is felt in the context of theatre. Marx talks about the relationship of visual images to text in theatre:

*The [visual] image is a wonderfully complex thing. It is a telling that is less structured than textual or verbal telling and it's one that rides on associations and people's experience of the world, using it to add to it. If you work with a given text the words are already there, they already provide a rhythm and a narrative, so in this sense I would see the relationship between the text and the image as the text tames the image. The text often works towards a conclusion; the image can open the text up, kick against it and provide a multiplicity of meaning.*

*(Marx, 2005)*

An object is either made or found. A found-object, by definition, has a previous function or context before it finds its way into a performance space. This context or function comes with the object, by association. An object constructed for the purpose of the performance may refer to some other context but does not necessarily. Constructed images and objects contain information, selection, exaggeration and interpretation in their form. These qualities therefore become reference points for a metaphorical understanding of the subject. Marx comments:

*The object brings with it a lot more than just the visual, it brings the whole range of sensual experiences, sound, texture, etc., but also it brings with it associations, recollections, meanings*

*etc. All of these are a rich field to draw on in breaking the fourth wall.*

*.(Marx, 2006)*

A functional, everyday object will be associated with the environment from which it originated as well as with its original function. A garlic crusher, for example, will bring to mind the domestic environment and possibly the kitchen. It will also be immediately associated with crushing. These connotations can be exploited or ignored in the performance but they will be present in the object whatever the case. These objects make reference to our experience in and of the 'real world'. In *Dolos*, the choice to use real (as opposed to puppet-scale and texture) objects and food in the kitchen is related to this. When Carol is in the kitchen the cooking is concerned with her ordering her life and objects in her environment. Carol as a whole character includes both the puppet and the manipulators so the objects needed to be real for the composite Carol. The found objects and chicken bring associations of the domestic into the space. The fact that they are more real, on some level, than Carol herself, allows them to have the power to dominate her. The raw chicken has a particular textural quality to it which is thrown into relief against the otherwise constructed environment. The clashing and uncomfortable partnership of these objects (the constructed Carol and the dead chicken) creates a dynamic that aims to call on the perceiver to question what is real. Marx speaks about using the associations objects bring with them both to create associations in and to activate the personal reality of the perceiver:

*[In making or bringing objects to theatre, the task is ]...to read the cultural landscape as text and therefore to bring certain fragments onto stage. Those fragments always have a relationship to their [original] context. So in bringing samples from the outside world the fragment carries with it the assumption of or association with the real.... Instead of representing the outside world, I would like to suggest...The audience member will have to try on his/her own associations and therefore would draw on their own realities in order to locate that fragment within the whole.*



In *Hear and Now* (Duckrabbitt, 2005) doorways, window frames and used books make up the whole environment in which the play takes place. These are not functional apertures as the principal character is physically and metaphorically trapped in a room. They are rather suggestions of openings towards the outside, openings onto the past and even a means to find closure in the future. The books create connotations of collected thoughts and amassed memories. The doors come to represent being enclosed as well as the possibility of passage and freedom. It is under one of these doors that the wooden legs, the burden of past pain, are finally buried.

Composite, non-figurative objects are objects made by combining found objects. These objects, abstract in form, contain within them other objects or parts of other objects. These bring to mind a reconstructed world. If they are functional they may create the atmosphere of a distorted environment for those who use them (either performers or other figurative objects). In *tenZone* the principal object is the tower, a three-level environment built from scaffolding. The structure has many other objects and constructions attached to it including a fireball-track, buckets, cogs, and see-sawing plank. These move and make sounds, giving the tower the qualities of a machine. Many of the objects and materials included on the tower have industrial origins or an industrial feel to them (scaffolding, welded joints, rusted metal pipes). The combination of these with the domestic objects gives an impression of a semi-industrial machine environment where people live and work.

The way objects are combined may be part of an overriding concept, or their form and action may be defined through their own internal logic. The action and progression of the piece can be developed out of what these objects suggest. For O'Donovan, the role of objects in the development of structure is central:

*We don't use any texts or explanation. The journey of objects is the narrative.*

*(O'Donovan, 2005)*

This journey is often determined by play, by experimentation and by technical necessity. All of these factors are discovered in relation to the elements present for a particular show.

Composite, figurative objects are recognisable figures formed from other, still recognisable objects. The figure will take on some of the qualities of the objects contained in its make-up. A human figure made with a sieve for a head will automatically have different qualities to one with a mallet-head. This is not only due to the original function of the object (a sieve being something that substances pass through while a mallet is used to hit things) but also to the different quality of the material (a sieve is see-through, fine and light whereas a mallet is solid and heavy).

A constructed object can also fall into two categories, figurative and non-figurative. The non-figurative or abstract object is a form, made from materials, that does not contain direct reference to another object or being. This, like abstract art talks to our emotions and inner perceptions. Alternatively it is an attempt at a representation of nothing specific (art for art's sake) and as such is a representation of art. Whether or not an individual perceiver relates emotionally to the abstract object she will understand that it is form resulting from imaginative or creative expression. With these objects, it is the form itself that will evoke associations and emotions. These will not be defined and therefore limited, by recognition. Some of the geometric forms that appear on the screen in *Tall Horse* are abstract patterns and shapes that give a sense of movement rather than referring to some other specific thing. Similarly, in *Dolos*, the dream sequence starts off with several abstract and semi-abstract images moving across the screen. They evoke, rather than relate, the dreamed experience of the character.

A figurative construction, on the other hand, will be most easily associated with the thing that it represents. What it brings metaphorically are all the ways in which it is not similar. Figurative constructions are objects constructed from materials to look like something recognisable. A miniature house, for example, will bring a house to mind, before anything else. However if the house is small and made of paper, the experiential domains of paper, scale and whatever else this brings up, will be mapped onto the experiential domain of 'house' in the mind of the perceiver. This may bring connotations of fragility, dominance, impermanence and countless other connotations depending on the context of its appearance and on the associations for the perceiver. Wood, constructed to look like a human figure, will bring to mind first 'human' and then 'wood'. In *Tall Horse*, many of the carved wooden puppets represent not only the human figure but also the way that person is or behaves. The King of France is a small puppet but with his feet on the ground. He is on the same level as the animals, which he loves. The queen, on the other hand, is a giant, domineering figure mounted on the backs of antelope. People in Paris, wild about the giraffe craze and frantic to see it, are represented with long necks. In *Hear and Now* the wooden legs tied around the main character's waist bring with them different layers of association. At first they seem to represent the crippled legs of an adult. However the proportion clashes and provokes further questioning. As the show progresses they come to be the young boy himself and then the memory of the child with which the adult is saddled and which are crippling him emotionally. All of these layers are contained in the object legs themselves and come to the fore through the way they are used and what happens around them.

The anthropomorphic object brings with it powerful associations with human life and also with death. Basil Jones talks about the moment when the perceiver is 'linked in' to the illusion of life created in the form and movement of a puppet:

*There is a form of mimesis happening, imitation, and the audience is seeing it happen. The audience is watching a...puppet become a person. There is a very elemental thing happening*

*when we do that. It is absolutely fundamental to ourselves in that we are creating life and we are flattering ourselves also as humans, creating other humans on stage for us to look at.*

*(Kohler and Jones 2005)*

The anthropomorphic qualities in the puppet are created simultaneously in the form and how it is used. The overall experience of reflected life can be both exciting and disturbing in its effect.

*That which constitutes the theatrical effectiveness of the puppet is largely the exhibition of a derisive, sinister or worrying reflection of our humanity. Either they are too strangely similar, taking on the qualities of a double or mannequin or else they propose only a vague resemblance composed of found materials, the image that they throw back at us obliges us to recognize ourselves in that into which we would generally refuse to project ourselves: into figures of dislocation, reification, of alienation but also of degradation in the obscene, the similarity with discarded fragments, of the conflict in silence and in death.*

*(Plassard, 2002:15 my translation)*

Valiere Novarina, considering the question of writing theatrically for puppets, points to his fascination with the essential 'deadness' of the puppet and its consequent potential to carry mortality within it even as it imitates life. His interest in the puppet is in its ability to capture that which we resist facing:

*It is to the dead that life must be given and not to do 'living' with the living, which would be too easy...it amounts to a reproduction...Don't reproduce that which we have in front but reproduce everything we have behind. Look behind the head. Everything that trembles behind the head, not the fixed block in front.*

*(Novarina, 2002:9, my translation)*

Both Plassard and Novarina are pointing to the puppet's potential to make theatrical the uncomfortable, the dark and painful aspects of our humanity, a thinking strongly influenced by Artaud.

Dario Fo writes about anthropomorphic puppets always creating connotations of altered states of mind and reality:

*The mannequin is always an alternative reality, representing a person without being human...it has a problematic double identity, established and unchangeable, a phantom outside time, a dream without a face.*

*(Fo in Cairns, 2000: 11)*

In *Dolos* the constructed idea of self is represented by the puppets. For the characters, and for the perceiver, these are the essential selves of Carol and Paul. The object-ness of these selves is intended to create a slight discomfort for the perceiver with these selves as they are less naturalistically human than the 'forces' which manipulate them. At the same time, their material presence places them in direct physical and spatial relationship with the perceiver. They are not putting on an act, they simply are what they are, objects without intention. This creates a tension as the alienating effect of the object as a reflection of the human body is played off against the physical presence of it as an entity. When the puppets pull each other apart, the physical puppet entity is no longer present as a unit. This moment of dismemberment and disintegration is intended to create a sense of scattering and uncertainty for the perceiver, as her relationship with the stability of the object as unit is disturbed.

A projected image as the perceiver sees it, figurative or abstract, does not exist as a concrete entity. It is a play of light on a given surface. So the 'thing' itself is an illusion, which reinforces its connotations of constructed views, mind-states and emotions, delusions, perceptions, dreams, imaginings and alternate realities. In *ten2one*, the images that the character watches on his 'TV' screen (sheet) are a series of stills, that develop the theme of the boss on the tower and falling off it. Whether these images are a representation of what the character is wishing for, his understanding of the cycles of life or an anonymous interpretation of the present or prediction of the

future, remains undefined. The images are clearly, however, some form of interpretation of the action and clearly not intended to convey concrete reality in any way. In *Dolos*, the screen on which the unconscious and semi-conscious images in the minds of Paul and Carol are projected is a shared one. The boundaries between personal and shared consciousness can be seen to blur here as do those between the conscious and unconscious minds.

### Object/ image metaphor and plot

In the examples of work by the companies mentioned here (Handspring, Magnet, Odd Enjinears, Duckrabbitt and Sogo) the metaphorical potential of objects and images is used dynamically in performance to advance the plot and develop the content of the piece.

In the work of these Visual Theatre makers there is a flow between the images created and the structure and/or plot of the final performance. In the writing and final structuring of the performance, the objects and images developed during the creative process and what these have come to mean symbolically, play a major role. When images and objects are used in this way they become an integral part of the plot. Marx comments:

*The object/image, in order to work effectively, needs to be written in, an engrained part of the piece. So we (myself and Lara Foot) started developing a visual language. It is not a conceptual communication. I provide her with drawings and she provides me with text. ... Prized images...are not developed through logical processes, they develop through a need to find an answer and through a struggle, through implicit creativity.*

*(Marx, 2005)*

*Hear and Now* carries in it a deep quality of reflection. As the characters turn inwards, revealing fragile memories, the carefully selected objects develop in meaning. No

object exists there arbitrarily or is left unused. There is a sense at the end of the play that there is more to everything in the space, both objects and characters, and one is left intrigued by the echoes provoked by the elements.

In *tenZone*, the objects, projection and the puppet form a picture of an everyday, working, industrial, domestic environment where realities are dominated by material functioning and constructed personas. This is almost entirely communicated through the constructions, the functioning of the objects (sound and action) and the metaphorical performer-object interactions.

Magnet Theatre works with developing image compounds that include the visual, textual and movement. Fleishman uses theatrical images to determine the structure. He talks about the process of structuring these images:

*[A] lot of the theatre that we do is based on... the construction of images. Images relate to each other in not necessarily traditional, realistic or logical ways. ... It's an organic process for me. I don't impose the narrative structure. ... The form is suggested by the content not the other way around. We look at it and say: that would look good in relation to that. It starts to construct itself narratively.*

*(Fleishman, 2005)*

In *Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints* the organic structuring process of which Fleishman speaks is felt visually and conceptually. The interlocking time-zones, cultures and forms of expression (from dance to text, from masked and stilted mythical creatures to simple everyday figures, from video to fire) contribute to an experience of the complexity of time and the ephemeral traces of memory.

In *Tall Horse*, the puppets and images are used to represent another era as well as a uniquely African re-interpretation (re-construction) of history. The plot, which involves bringing this history to life while maintaining the transparency of the illusion, is clearly carried forward by the objects and the way they are used.

In *Elise's Adventures*, the puppets and images represent different aspects of a character and her perceptions of the world. As the perceiver gets to know different aspects of the character, so we see them emerge visually and begin to confront each other. Her perceptions and views are projected and she is brought to a realization of their constructed and limited nature.

## OBJECTS IN THEATRE RELATING TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF SELF

In the first part of this paper, the nature of individual reality and its relationship to Visual Theatre was discussed. In the second part, the metaphorical connotations of objects and images in performance were explored. Many of the connotations of the objects used in *Dolos* which relate to the self have already been touched on. What remains is to bring the content together with the concept of the layered Self. What follows, therefore, is an examination of this idea of self and of the way objects and images are used in *Dolos* to capture it.

### The defense of the idea of Self

*The puppet mirrors the doubling of my own corporeal existence: the own and the other are interwoven in indispensable and necessary phenomenological interplay. The puppet is at once material and animated being, and both modes of being depend on its performance. The splitting of the human self is concealed by identifying strategies and images which construct the evidence of coherence. However, it can be and is dismantled by the puppet's performative potential.*

(Wagner, 2006:136)

According to Buddhist philosophy the sense of a Self arises as appearances are created in the mind. The mind grasps onto them as real and forms the idea of a Self perceiving these appearances. Because the sense of self is empty of independent existence, it is



fragile. This fragility gives rise to protection mechanisms, characterised by a constant assessment of phenomena, stemming from attachment and aversion. As it experiences external phenomena as real it is threatened by them and sets up defences in relation to them. Then the mind becomes attached not only to the self as an independently existing entity but also to the specific defence mechanisms, which become identified as defining characteristics.

*The experience of oneself relating to other things is actually a momentary discrimination, a fleeting thought. If we generate these fleeting thoughts fast enough, we can create the illusion of continuity and solidity. So we build up an idea, a preconception, that self and other are solid and continuous. And once we have this idea, we manipulate our thoughts to confirm it, and we are afraid of any contrary evidence.*

*(Trungpa, 1976:13)*

*... we set up me and my territory, ...(and) use our projections as credentials to prove our existence. The source of the effort to confirm our solidity is an uncertainty as to whether or not we exist. Driven by this uncertainty, we seek to prove our own existence by finding a reference point outside ourselves, something with which to have a relationship, something solid to feel separate from.*

*(Trungpa, 1976:19)*

In the beginning of *Dolos*, the bodies of Paul and Carol are wrapped up in each other. Their unconscious forces are beginning to feel each other out, to establish their territory. This is a game of poker where the stakes are identity and power. The defenses are playing with each other and, at the same time, subtly against each other. This is the process of them defining themselves in relation to one another, of taking territory and reinforcing their sense of self.

According to the Buddhist view projections are the formation of concepts around perceptions and the belief that these concepts are real. Carol perceives a change in tone in her mother's voice and forms the concept of pressure around marriage. She

then projects the perceived source of this pressure onto her mother. In reality the experience of pressure originates in her own mind but Carol believes it to come from her mother and reacts accordingly. This is projection.

*Ego develops three strategies or impulses with which to relate to its projections: indifference, passion and aggression. These impulses are guided by perception. Perception, in this case, is the self-conscious feeling that you must officially report back to central headquarters what is happening in any given moment. Then you can manipulate each situation by organising another strategy.*

*(Trungpa, 1976:21)*

As Carol becomes afraid that the relationship with Paul will not give her what she wants, she begins to experience the relationship with Paul as a threat. She is afraid of what she perceives to be the impending threat of rejection. She uses the three strategies defined by Trungpa to deal with this.

*In the strategy of indifference, we numb any sensitive areas that we want to avoid, that we think might hurt us. .... Passion, trying to grasp things and eat them up...is a magnetising process. ....Whenever there is a feeling of poverty, hunger, impotence, then we reach out, we extend our tentacles and attempt to hold onto something. Aggression...is also based upon the experience of poverty, the feeling that you cannot survive and therefore must ward off anything that threatens your property or food. Moreover the more aware you are of the possibilities of being threatened, the more desperate your action becomes.*

*(Trungpa, 1976:21-22)*

Carol's three inner characters perceive the threat differently and formulate different strategies for dealing with it. Their arguments about how best to respond represent what Trungpa talks of as 'reporting to headquarters' and the decision-making process in organising a response. The puppet of Carol is subject to whichever view holds sway at a particular moment. Indifference is otherwise known as suppression. Using

indifference Criticalbitch tries to numb the sensitive areas: the joy of the experience of being with Paul and Carol's self-doubt expressed through Whiner. It is Criticalbitch who interrupts the daydreams of love and who cuts Whiner off from expressing her anxiety. Her strategy is to turn to activity. Her exclamations like: "Oh, pull it together Carol, got to get on with the day!" are less about getting on with things than about suppressing the current thought patterns which are uncomfortably threatening. At first this aspect of Carol is able to maintain control but as the conversation about Paul keeps resurfacing, other responses start to hold sway. Whiner erupts into a desperate monologue of compromise, fighting for the option of drawing Paul in through catering to what she imagines he wants. This is what Trungpa refers to as passion. Her desperate attempt to grasp and hold on to the relationship is revolting to Criticalbitch. As the tension inside Carol mounts and Criticalbitch is no longer able to implement indifference and suppression, she turns to aggression, turning first against herself and then against Paul. Finally, her defenses decide she must leave the relationship in order to survive emotionally. All of this is in response to a perceived threat to her 'Self' which has no independent reality.

Similarly, for Paul, it is an imagined threat to his concept of freedom that provokes his defenses to leap into action. Paul, however, is less inclined to wind himself up as a person and is more interested in dispelling the discomfort of the question at hand through taking the option that will keep the peace. While GQ Guy is not happy with the conclusion Paul reaches, he is persuaded to go along by Scouty's insistent certainty and Doughboy's enthusiasm. This decision is not about loving Carol and wanting to be with her but about the right choice, the responsible thing to do. It is a choice made out of the defenses' need to protect Paul from vulnerability, from feeling bad for doing the 'wrong' thing or being left alone.

When Carol makes the decision to leave Paul based on her defensive response and not on her true feeling in the situation, her mind rebels. It is at this point that the objects that she has been trying to control start to threaten her and she is no longer

able to separate herself from her environment. She becomes the chickens she was reading about as well as the torturer of the chickens. She is unable to separate the images in her mind and in her environment. Paul's call breaks into the world of her mind forcing the puppet Carol to respond logically and re-gain control which she manages to some extent although not without Paul noticing that something is going on.

While the defenses are out in full force controlling the characters, the characters have the experience of thinking things through logically, working it all out. However what they don't realize is that each of these voices is simply an alternate survival strategist, trying to protect the sense of self that is represented by the puppet. The puppets, like the sense of self are controlled by the defenses and yet are unaware of what motivates these forces.

All the characters are influenced by the images on the screen that represent the flickering of semi-conscious thoughts and sensations. These are not controlled by either the manipulators of the characters concerned or by the puppets. They are sensations that arise in the unconscious mind and erupt as images before they are logically processed. In a sense it is what the shadows provoke which causes the response in the defenses and the action in the puppets. There is a constant interaction between these aspects of the characters, so that at some moments it is the screen (the unconscious) that is the source of the action, at other moments it is the sense of self (as in the restaurant), and at others it is the defenses.

When the characters finally burst out into the fight, the defenses recognise each other and use their insight to pull each other apart. As the puppet-objects are pulled to pieces and the defenses exposed, the characters are left without a sense of self and other. Just for a moment. But even at the same time as they are being with each other in the state of emptiness, they begin to re-form themselves. The exposed defenses reconstruct the sense of self of both characters without which they are unable to act and interact. So in the end the puppets are re-formed to what they were but since they have constructed each other, they are known to each other in a new way. As they

marry and turn to leave, the objects trailing behind them in their veils speak of the personal, social and cultural baggage already cemented in place.

## CONCLUSION

*Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things...Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object, the object is not important.*

*(Shklovsky in States, 1985: 21)*

For human beings, sensation and feeling exist in and through many different aspects of ourselves. There is the direct physical, sensorial aspect, the emotional aspect and the conceptual and intellectual aspect of ourselves. No one of these aspects is more or less important in our experience of the sensation of life. Art is an expression of the human experience of life, whether this be internal or in relation to the world as we perceive it. Whether or not the art we make touches the sensation of life for others depends on how effectively it captures the original sensorial experience of the artist and how effectively it accesses and transforms sensation in the perceiver.

Semiology holds that the access to a true understanding of art and life is through interpretation of the signs we create to communicate. For the semiologist, the human mind is constantly interpreting signs. To understand these codes of interpretation gives one access to the meanings being created and read by others. Phenomenology asserts that the only truth or reality lies in perceived sensation that exists before the formation of concept. It thus promotes a deferral of interpretation in favour of a response of the senses. It is for the creation of this sensation that phenomenologically-based artists work, and from this perspective that they read and interpret it. From a Madhymaka Buddhist philosophical perspective, all perception, sensation and conception are illusory, existing only in the mind of the perceiver. The ultimate truth, a state of objective non-dualism lies outside the experience of the subjective mind and cannot be conceptualised or sensed by it. Inside the relative (subjective) state of existence, all perception, cognition and experience of existence is valid as a dualistic( self-other) perspective. The function of artistic expression, from this point of view, is to work with

relative truths to reveal their relativity. Thus the relative aim of artistic expression holds within it both the semiological and the phenomenological as it is through both perceiving things in a new way and through an understanding of the symbols of interpretation, that the illusion of life can be revealed.

The function of artistic expression through theatre can be understood from a Madhyamaka perspective as a parallel to the function of dream. In western psychoanalysis the symbols represented in a dream are important access points to the unconscious and through them repressed experiential and emotional material can be released and integrated. While this is seen, once again, by the Madhyamaka Buddhist as a valuable process (in relative experience) for stabilising the mind, it is not ultimately important as it remains dualistic in its basis in the concept of self. While the stable mind is more likely to be able to recognise its true nature (non-dualism and the inherent non-existence of the self) the stability is not, in itself, the aim. Life is considered to be like an ongoing dream of illusions from which the mind can awake through the recognition of its (the mind's) nature. This should not be understood as a conceptual recognition but as an experiencing of the non-dualistic state in which the sense of self is no longer present. From the Madhyamaka perspective, dream is an alternative state of mind in which one can awake and recognise the vivid illusion (lucid dreaming). Theatre can be seen to be a similar forum, an alternative space for the mind from the everyday reality. In this alternative space, closely associated with illusion, the mind can more readily recognise its own constructions, illusions, projections and sensations. Once again recognise does not imply conceptual recognition only although conception forms part of the process.

In Madhyamaka philosophy, theatre and life are the same. They are both part of relative reality, there is no more ultimate reality in the one than in the other. However, because theatre is a recognisably constructed experience and environment concerned with human sensation, it is full of potential for the recognition of constructs for all concerned. Access to an understanding of how theatre relates to the creator and

perceiver's experience of life, is gained through an understanding of the making of meaning in theatre.

Resonance, a term used here to indicate the effect in the perceiver touched by artistic expression, is seen to be provoked through three key access points to an individual's reality: through lived experience (the sensorial perception of objects and dynamics); through conception (the formation of conscious and unconscious constructs around experience); and through metaphor (the mapping of one experiential domain onto another). These access points are not separate but mutually co-dependent and form part of one process.

Visual Theatre, as a medium of expression, is, I would argue, an innately metaphorical form. Conscious concepts of the mind are carried in language but resonance goes beyond the conscious mind as an experience. Image-based theatre cannot be entirely literal as the image is not linguistically based. This allows for a wide range of perceptive and interpretive experience which can, and often does, go beyond conscious constructs. As the perceptive experience in Visual Theatre is mapped onto internal and personal domains of experience, the process becomes metaphorical. Not all metaphorical connotations of theatrical images and/or object and visual images in theatre are consciously constructed.. It is more often in a provocation of response that they are used, leaving room for interpretation and experience by the perceiver.

From the interviews with the South African Visual Theatre makers conducted as part of this study, as well as from my observations of their work, clear trends of concern emerge. Gerhard Marx's theoretical placement of his work within a clearly articulated phenomenological context is reflected in his carefully designed use of objects in the theatre. His focus in meaning-making theory and practice falls on the re-revealing of the object in this context. Mark Fleishman's concern with metaphor is closely associated with his concern for the complex socio-political context in which he experiences himself working. Both lead to a layering and density of theatrical images built on a concern for the process of location. Both Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler of



Handspring Puppet Company show a concern for the intense vitality that can be experienced in theatre. Their essentially phenomenological search for vivid and living images and dynamics between audience, puppet and performer is articulated. An interest in the semiotics of puppetry in theatre also emerges strongly in their approach. Mark O'Donovan, instinctively phenomenological in his search for a truth of experience, actively resists the conscious and conceptual in the creation of work while, at the same time, creating highly connotative images. My own work, framed in the Madhyamaka concern with the mind's constructs of reality explores the revelation of the illusion of self through metaphorical means.

Manipulation is defined here as movement of objects so as to create illusory identity in the object. In the case of puppets this is most often the illusion of life. There are clearly strong parallels here to the illusory nature of human life. This paper establishes some of the basic metaphorical qualities of objects, puppets and visual images in theatre. These can be developed consciously as they were in *Dolos*, or reside there in ambiguous images and unarticulated metaphor. Which of these is more effective in reaching the perceiver has not been the subject of this paper but either way, these connotations come with the medium.

Throughout the explication, *Dolos* is placed in context on the basis of its stylistic choices, its contextual and thematic concerns and in how these inter-relate. Coming from the viewpoint that reality is an illusion, the 'self' and self concept are equally illusory. Puppetry plays in the territory of the make-believe. It is an illusion that is created and broken simultaneously. This play between living and inanimate, between life and death, and between existence and non-existence is the material from which the relationship with the constructed self is fabricated.

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Appendix 1. *Dolos* script

**DOLOS**

Directed by Janni Younge

Written by Julia Teale, Janni Younge and the cast

**Cast**

Paul:	Albert Pretorius (as DB) Jason Potgieter (as GQ) , and Nkosinathi Gaar (as Scouty)
Carol:	Briony Horwitz (as Sexpot) Sannie Fox (as CB), and Tamarin McGinley (as Whiner)

**Production Team**

Design and concept	Janni Younge
Original music	Daniel Eppel
Puppets	Janni Younge
Costumes	Janni Younge and Ilka Louw
Lighting Design	Daniel Galloway



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## THE CHARACTERS

Paul: Doughboy (referred to as DB)

GQ man (referred to as GQ)

Scouty

...and Mutt the Dog

Carol: Whiner

Criticalbitch (referred to as Critbitch and CB)

Sexpot

...and the mother on the phone.

### 1. The defenses are activated

The puppets, hang in an embrace about 2.5m from the floor, just behind the proscenium. The space is misty and dark with a cold, low, horizontal light. The puppets are tightly lit with a warmer light. Figures, head to toe in black start to walk across the stage, disappearing into the wings. Their walks become more distinctive two groups of three move together. They become conscious of each other. A figure peels off from each group and the two begin to dance a slow dance. The others are clearly agitated. The couple breaks up and the groups of three re-form. They position themselves in a semi-circle and begin to play Poker. The one group loses two rounds and at the end, one member of third group (DB) goes and pulls the puppets down and takes the male one. The other group take the female puppet. Each group dresses its puppet and they are positioned in their environments. She is in a domestic space (SL) and he in a car (SR).

Paul and Carol are dating. Paul has a dog called Mutt

### 2. Paul and Carol at home

*Carol is in her house, cooking and preparing her meals for the coming week. Paul is in his car, reading the paper. He has a little chat with Mutt.*

*Mutt is on the seat beside him and bugging him for attention.*

Paul: What's it boy? Wanna go for a walk? In a bit, my friend, I have to square a few things away first.

*Mutt persists with tail wagging and nudging with nose etc.*

Paul: So we've got a big trip coming up, hey? Carol is not going to be happy with us, my boy, so we are going to have to think of ways to cheer her up!

*Mutt sits to attention, all on the alert.*

Paul: Dinner out, I think. Nah, we always do that. I know! I'll cook!

*Mutt cringes.*

Paul: You're right, I am not much of a cook. But what about a braai, hey boy? Hey boy?

*Mutt sits up again, wagging tail vigorously.*

Paul: We'll do her favourite – chicken! Joe's recipe, the one with mayo, chutney and beer! And we'll make it all romantic, you know, with a nice picnic, candles, wine..... Ja, that's what well do!

### 3. Carol's mother calls.

*The phone in Carol's house rings and gradually the light starts going down on the car, it is her Mum:*

Carol: Hello?

Mum: Darling, I just thought I would check how you are. You didn't call me all week. (slightly complaining voice)

Carol: It has been a bit hectic, Mum, remember the new campaign I've been working on? Well, it has been accepted!"

Mum: Marvellous darling! Does that mean you will get a bit of a break sometime? Daddy and I are so excited that you and Paul will be coming up for our anniversary, and it would be so relaxing for you if you could stay for the whole weekend!

Carol: (reservedly) I would love to Mum, but don't get your hopes up, because Mr. Wheeler says he has got me in line for promotion, but that would mean a bit more pressure, I'm afraid, so we would have to get back on the Sunday morning.

Mum: Darling, there is more to life than work, work, work! I do wish you would take better care of yourself."

Carol: But Mum, I do, and it is hardly like I would want to miss an opportunity for a better salary! (slightly irritated)

Mum: (after a pause) How's Paul?

Carol: (guardedly) Fine.

Mum: Speaking of anniversaries, you and Paul have been together for almost three years now, is it not? He's such a nice boy, we really like him, you know?

Carol: silence

Mom: So how are things with you and Paul?

Carol: Fine.

Mom: Darling, don't you think it's time that you two made more of a commitment to each other?

Carol: Christ Mom!! You know that Paul has to travel a lot, and that his research is very demanding, and I have just told you about my promotion and all I get is nag, nag, nag about getting married again! I have told you over and over again, Paul and I simply are not ready!

Mum: There is no need to get snotty with me darling, its just that Daddy and I so want you to be happy and we do worry about you,

Carol: Sorry Mum, I am under a lot of pressure at the moment and I can't deal with this right now.

Mom: I know darling, but you are in your thirties now....

Carol: Ok Mom, gotta go! I'm late for dinner with Paul. Bye!

#### 4. Dinner

*Carol and Paul hug before sitting down, and menu's appear before them. They glance at them before beginning an animated conversation.*

Paul: So how was your day love? Any luck with the Wheeler-dealer?

Carol: Actually things are looking up. He liked my ideas and the promotion is going to happen.

Paul: That's great my love, I'm so proud of you!

Carol: Ag it's not such a big deal...

Paul: No it is, its fantastic. Come here, you the best...(kisses her)

Carol: Hope I can keep up with the demands.

Paul: Course you can. Just watch out that he doesn't take an arm and a leg. You know how that guy can get you to dance for him.

Carol: I know, I know. I have been trying not to, but I find it hard to say no to him, after all he really likes my work and if I get this promotion there is a lot in it for me.

Paul: I realize that, sweetheart, it just pisses me off when I see how tired you get. And sounds selfish but I could use seeing a bit more of you than I have been lately.

Carol: Its just a phase. Things will settle down at the office before long. Anyway, I have carved out next weekend specially for us, coz of the anniversary.

Paul: Anniversary?

Carol: You know, my folks.

Paul: Shit! I completely forgot! I've organized a field trip for my students because I thought you would be busy.

Carol: Oh.... But it is the same date every year.

Paul: Yes. But everything has been a bit out of sync lately.

Carol: I's'pose it has. I'm sorry my love I should have reminded you. I just assumed...I was looking forward to spending time with you in their little cottage in the garden...

Paul: Yes. We always seem to have such a lovely time there.

Carol: Sleeping late, cuddles, making love, being served brekkies in bed by Mavis.

Paul: I suppose I could shift the trip.

Carol: Really! That would be great!

Their drinks arrive and Paul proposes a toast.

Paul: To my talented, gorgeous woman, and her promotion!

Carol: To us!

They ching glasses and order their food.

After a short pause.

Carol: Mum was on the phone again today.

Paul: Mmmmmm.....

Carol: Sometimes she just seems to wind me up.

Paul: Mmmm?

Carol: Her and Dad are really applying the pressure now.

Paul: What pressure?

Carol: You know, marriage, family, babies, domestic bliss!

Paul: Oh, that.

Carol: Ja. It seems to mean so much to them, are your folks still after you?

Paul: Nah, they've given up on me.

Carol: You're lucky, mine are like dogs with a bone! After all, you would think it was clear by now that I'm not into that sort of thing.

*Her manipulators stiffen and stare at her in disbelief*

Paul: Ag, it's generational. They had to. We just have so much more freedom than they did.

Carol: Ja, I suppose so.

The food arrives and Carol tucks in vigorously, while Paul eats in a more measured way. I.e.: He puts his napkin on his lap and salts his food before starting. Carol stuffs in a huge mouthful and then remembers her napkin and grabs the salt.

Carol: God, this is divine! How's yours?

Paul: Its quite good.

Carol: (already reaching over with her fork) Taste some?

Paul: Sure. (And pushes the plate slightly towards her...)

Carol: (around a mouthful of food) But I feel my mom can be such a bitch sometimes. She keeps bringing up my age and making me feel really obliged, you know?

Paul: Ag, your mom is not so bad, she just worries about you.

Carol: Ja, well she's nice to you.

Paul: Well, we could get married just to keep her happy?

All the Manipulators stare at him.

Carol: But what would that mean for us?

Paul: Well, it has its plusses. I mean, we could share a bond and stuff like that.

Carol: Uh-uh. I would like it to at least mean something more than that.

Paul: But I thought you said you weren't into getting married?

Carol: Ja, no, er marriage? Blah! No I'm not. I was just saying IF, THEN...you know..

Carols manipulators stare at her and a glass falls over in her house. Paul puts down his knife and fork and wipes his mouth with his napkin..

Carol: (leaning across) Don't you want that? (eagerly)

Paul: Actually, I was going to keep it for Mutt. My boy digs his steak.

Carols manipulators turn their backs on Paul in disgust. Mutt sits up panting eagerly

Carol sits back, clearly disappointed.

Paul: But do you want it? Go on, I don't mind, hey.

Mutts head droops

Carol: (resentfully) No, keep it for Mutt.

Mutt sits up expectantly again

Paul: (losing his patience) Carol, just take it.

Mutt slumps

Carol: No, its ok, I was just being a pig anyway.

Mutt up

Paul: (softening) That's ok, you deserve it.

Mutt gives up but Carol doesn't take it.

Pause..

Carol: Are you saying I'm a pig?

Paul: No!

CB: You are! and neurotic! and fat!

Carol: Then what are you saying?

Paul: Nothing, I was just offering you the steak!

CB: He's saying that he doesn't want you.

Carol slumps dejected. At that moment the menu's appear again. Carol ignores hers.

Paul: Aren't you going to have something?

Carol: No, I'll just have a coffee.

Paul to waiter: One coffee and a tiramisu with two spoons please.

The dessert arrives.

Paul, offering spoon to Carol: Share?

Carol: No, its ok.

Paul: Please? Ag, come on, you know you are the sexiest woman in the world! And it turns me on when we feed each other. (Last bit in a sexy, seductive voice.)

She gives a shy giggle and they feed each other the dessert.

## 5. The dance

The whole thing calms down, the scene dissolves, they float gently into the air where they dance.

On VO:

Carol's manipulator: She rests in his presence.

Paul's manipulator: Seeing her smile he wants to be inside her being, laughing with her.

Carol's manipulator: She wants to give him her breath, so that he can feel the vibration in it, which is there for him.

Paul's manipulator: He breathes in with his eyes closed and opens them to find her still there. He smiles.



Carol's manipulator: The part of her heart connected to her stomach comes to her face. It shines.

Paul's manipulator: The outward movement brings him closer to her until he is inside of her. There, so there.

Carol's manipulator: She holds more of him into her and as she does she is more certain of herself.

Paul's manipulator: He lets himself be.

Carol's manipulator: Just there, with him, she is.

Together: Completely.

They separate and land back in their own spaces.

## 6. Carol dreams

Carol dreams images of her and Paul making love which dissolve into her perfect wedding, big wedding cake, dress, big church, big house, envious friends, satisfied father, ecstatic mother and so on, finishing with a pink rainbow and her being carried by him through the threshold.

## 7. Carol's day begins

*The phone rings, an alarm clock appears in the dream, Carol jerks awake etc, lunges for the alarm clock. As she sits up the phone stops ringing. She falls back on the bed, head in hands. The phone rings again:*

Carol: (sleepily and worried) Hello?

Mom: Carol, I've just been thinking... . About the anniversary. You know, if you and Paul want to come up on the Friday night, and then...

Carol interrupts: Mom! Do you know what time it is?

Mom: Yes dear, its eight o clock.

Carol: Normal people sleep in on Saturdays.

Mom: Oh, darling, did I get you up? Sorry dear, I'll call again later, shall I?

Carol: Well I'm up now, mom. What do you want?

Mom: Darling, do you remember the name of that photographer who took such good pictures at you cousin's wedding? Well, I thought of using him for our little celebration, do you have his number?

Carol: Why would I have it, why don't you phone Theresa? It was her wedding.

Mom: Oh dear, there you go being snotty again. Sorry to have bothered you.  
Bye!

*The phone is banged down.*

*Carol just sits quietly at the table. Her thought voice gently sighs: Oh mom...*

*Her thoughts about her dream begin to float gently on the screen this also includes erotic and romantic moments from the night before. Her thoughts about what she has to do for the day start to drift in and out of her consciousness.*

Carol: I will have to do some cooking today... see what's in the fridge.... Think there's still some chicken.. maybe need to get carrots, a few potatoes...its would be nice to see Paul today... he doesn't eat well, hope he's ok,...nice dream..... I know, how about roast chicken and potatoes...last night...beautiful... love him so much...is he thinking 'bout me now?

### **8. Carol's manipulators emerge**

*Suddenly the lights are snapped on the images grind to a halt.*

Critbitch: "Oh pull yourself together Carol, gotta get on with the day!"

Whiner: Tea!

CB: Tea, yes

Sexpot: Need tea. Ceylon, Earl grey...

CB: There's no milk!

Sexpot: PAUL!

CB: I'm gonna kill Paul. I hate him.

Sexpot: No I don't hate him. Whiner: I don't hate Paul.

Whiner: I keep telling him not to drink out of the carton and put it back empty.  
Chamomile?

Sexpot: Chamomile.

CB: I hate Chamomile.

Whiner: Wanna go back to bed.

Sexpot: Bed (groan)... that dream...

CB: Meals for the week!

Sexpot: Food, yes.

Whiner: I'm hungry.

CB: Plan, need a plan. Ok get it together. The week ok focus.

Sexpot: Crispy roast..

CB: Need five meals...

Sexpot: I'll eat out Friday

CB: So four

Whiner: There's only one chicken.

CB: have to go to Checkers...

Sexpot: Euhw Checkers

CB: God I hate Checkers.

Sexpot: Nothing ever fresh. Tea.

Whiner: It smells funny.

CB: I'm sure there cockroaches.

Whiner: The parking guards...

Sexpot: So manipulative

CB: A made up job!

Whiner: Don't wanna feel guilty.

CB: I'm not going to Checkers. Two meals from one chicken. Fry the breasts and the rest in stock.

Sexpot: Pity about the roast..

Whiner: mmm, pity.

CB: Gotta manage the week

Sexpot: There is tuna.

CB: Tuna, yes and tomatoes and the pasta thing for the other two nights.

Whiner: I'm hungry

CB: Got to get on. Eat later. Ok, so stock and breasts.

Sexpot: The chicken.

Whiner: Some veg.

CB: Fry first., then get stock going. Ok, wait whaddo we need

S: Pot

W: Garlic and ginger

S: yes a bit of ginger with the breast

CB: Ok lets just get it all out

*Carol gets out the ingredients as they say these things. They start to cook. Switch on the pan and pot. Cut the breasts out of the chicken. Oil in pan. Start to fry.*

*Carol starts to hum to herself the music of the dream. She peels garlic, throws ginger in the pan, stirs the chicken and drinks some of her tea.*

*She chops a potato.*

*Images of the night start to play again on the screen. The manipulators turn to look. Carol stops chopping. She looks up into the distance.*

Sexpot: Paul...

*CB picks up the knife and chops madly. Carol looks back at the knife and takes hold of it.*

CB (clicks tongue) Onion first idiot.

*Carol leaves the potato and takes the onion. Drops it. Carol goes after it but freezes.*

CB: (taking off hood) Fuckit Carol you're such a clutz. No wonder Paul doesn't want to marry you.

Whiner: I don't know he doesn't want to. Although...

CB: he didn't bite at the hints.

Sexpot: Men can't understand hints. Too subtle.

Whiner: Do I want to get married?

CB: Breasts going to burn. Put in tomato. Its clear that its about time we get married. I'm not getting any younger and I suppose there is no time like the present.

Whiner and Sexpot: Ja, ja, ja,

Whiner: Ooh! It would be lovely...nice not to have to work so hard... spend more time at home.

Critbitch: (Taking off whiner's hood) Whoa! I'm not giving up my career for a man!

Whiner: Calm down, nobody said you had to!

CB: I do agree with Paul's point that we could make some joint investments and consolidate.

Sexpot: Oh so cold! There's so much more...mmm...Paul and I are perfect. Such great sex.

Whiner: Ja, makes me feel so good about me. (Leans on hand with elbow on counter. Carol makes the same gesture at the same time) I always want to feel as good as I do when I'm around Paul.

Critbitch: It just looks like he's never going to pop the question. We need to put the screws on him somehow.

Sexpot: Mmmm screws, yes...

(Whiner giggles)

CB (taking Sexpot's hood off but talking to the puppet) Can you get a grip on yourself please Carol?!

Sexpot: I'll just withhold sex for a while. That should get him thinking.

Whiner: No no, no, no, no. That would just make him go away.

Critbitch: This waiting can't go on

Whiner: Be a bit patient, give him a chance...

Sexpot: Their brains do work slower than ours.

Whiner: Carol!

CB: I think we should just confront him with a contract. Like, now buddy, or never!

Pause

Sexpot: No, no, turnoff. Men don't like being told what to do. I need to get in the backdoor. You know, make him think it's his idea.

Whiner: I wish he would just ask. I mean, I hint at it all the time.

Critbitch: He probably doesn't want to because he can see what a needy little whiner you are.

Whiner: I jus' don't wanna be pushy...he needs time and all that, he's so independent. He's not ready. I just need to wait and be nice to him. He needs me and I want him to trust me forever and for it to come from him so that I know he really loves me...and you know...so I know how much it means to him...to me I mean. I mean maybe if he sees how much I need him and how unhappy this waiting is making me, maybe I can tell him..tell him *my truth* and maybe, maybe...

CB: So what is 'your truth Carol'. All this sickly winging...

Sexpot: ...I wish you would do something about your fat ass, no man wants a woman with an ass like yours.

Whiner: I don't think Paul minds the way I look, in fact, he said he finds me cuddly.

CB: Cuddly, that's disgusting. He did say that didn't he? He can be such an asshole!

Whiner: He is a bit insensitive but I don't think asshole is fair. And actually I have seen the unhappy look in his eyes when you get so bossy.

Sexpot: You are very uptight Carol. You know you need to loosen up a bit.

Critbitch: Well, somebody has to make decisions around here!

Whiner: You see, there you do it again, you just can't stop yourself. You are *very* hard work. I'm sure you fire him out.

Sexpot: Relax, give him a good shag and you'll feel better.

CB: Oh god, you are *so* common. Paul could pick up another girl like you off the street corner.

Sexpot: Maybe I should let him do that and move on while I'm still attractive.

Whiner: But I thought we were going to settle down.

Critbitch: How can we, dumbo? Paul isn't interested. In fact I think he just hangs around for what he can get.

Sexpot: Well I'm happy to give it to him!

Whiner: Actually, he wasn't so nice the other night. I mean, he said I was fat!

Critbitch: Well, you are.

Sexpot: That's beside the point. More to the point, is what do we get out of this?

Whiner: It would be lovely to start a family!

Critbitch: I'm not doing the baby thing. One minute you're a high earning woman with a life and the next minute you're living in your dressing gown and a slave to rancid formula and buckets of wet nappies.

Sexpot: No wonder men go running off.

Whiner: But I would like to get married. And what if Paul wants babies?

Critbitch: Get over yourself, Paul doesn't want you never mind your babies.

Whiner: But he loves me?

*Carol lifts the lid of the pot to check the stock, the chicken jumps out and sings*

Chicken (CB): It's easy  
All you need is love,  
All you need is love,  
All you need is love,  
Love is all...

Cut off by Carol returning the lid

Sexpot: Love's my body more like.

Critbitch: What, your cellulite? The only reason Paul would marry you, is because you can cook and he likes to have his stomach full. He won't dump you 'cos your not worth the effort. He's biding his time. He'll be off as soon as something better comes by...

Sexpot: I wanna new g-string.

Whiner: Well at least he likes my cooking. (cleaning) And I am a tidy person.

CB: Look at you, would you stop for a moment Carol? You're obsessive. Better be happy he wants you for a domestic. Its all you're good at...But don't expect him to give you the permanent position...

Whiner: At least I have a job. A good one. Paul respects me for that.

Chicken: RESPCT, find out...

CB: Anybody can do what you do. And that promotion... You think your so special "mom I've got the new contract, I'm so busy and important"...Purleez. You know what Wheeler is after...

Sexpot: Should I give it to him?

CB: you might as well, you're such a little slut

Sexpot: Fuck you

CB: Face it the only thing you are good for is a bit of a fuck and a clean house. Clean, clean, clean and cockety, cookety clean

Sexpot: I'm out of here!

Whiner: where will you go? nobody wants you. You think you're so irresistible how come Paul looked at that girl's legs in Checkers the other day. Nobody would look at me that way.

Sexpot: Paul still wants me....

CB: because you're on hand.

Sexpot: Well fuck him

Whiner: He doesn't listen to me

CB: Oh, shut up.

Whiner: He doesn't really care for me. I think he wants my money.

CB: Bastard. I am going to leave him

Whiner (sarcastic):Ja, focus on your career...become more of the driven **nobody** you are! Climb that mediocre ladder to nowhere!

CB: Better than stagnating in a domestic cesspool!

Whiner: He won't even notice if I go

CB: I can't breath

*CB and Whiner start to hyperventilate. The Chicken, manipulated by Sexpot, jumps out of the pot onto the counter singing:*

Chicken: Tell him that the sun and moon rise in his eyes...

CB and Whiner cry out and Carol stabs the chicken. She falls back in **horror** looking at the mess in the kitchen. She leans on the counter. Breaths.

CB: You have to tell him.                      Sexpot: get out, get out!

Carol (whiner): I don't want to...I don't want to, I don't want to

CB: You have to!                      Sexpot: get out, get out!

*Carol puts her hands to her head and cries to block out their voices. She goes to the table and cries. She holds her hands over her ears. She starts to sing one of the Chicken songs to herself loudly and pulls the newspaper over towards her. An article appears on the screen:*

### Rainbow slaughterhouse

On Rainbow farm 18 chickens live in 1 square meter, suffering **breast blisters**, chronic dermatitis and leg disorders. Their faeces are not removed resulting in strong **ammonia fumes** and disease.

The chickens, exposed to light 23 out of 24 hours a day, don't stop eating.

They are caught, shackled upside down on a conveyor belt. Fluttering, **shrieking and vomiting** they are dumped in electrified water to induce paralysis.

After stunning they have their throats slit but since the blade often **misses the throat**, they are dragged, conscious, through boiling water during the feather-removal process.

Meat consumption has reached an all-time high, despite staggering **evidence of cruelty** and increasing confirmation that meat-based diets are unhealthy and ecologically **unsustainable**.

*Carol, at first fascinated buy the horror of it, pushes the paper vigorously away from her. The light dims as she reads and shadow images of chickens. Gagging, she throws herself onto her bed an huddles under the sheet. CB whispers a string of continuous insults in her ear:*

CB: Oh do you feel bad for the chickens? Like your **feelings make** and difference! Miserable, empty nothing; ambitious little freak; competitive bitch; uptight,



self -centered control freak, Whining, clawing needy pathetic, you'll never get anywhere stupid, arrogant useless etc.

*The other two manipulators throw themselves on the chicken in the pan and begin to devour it.*

CB: Look at you stuffing your face with Monday's food. No self control, you disgust me. Miserable, empty nothing; ambitious little freak; competitive bitch; uptight, self -centered control freak, Whining, clawing needy pathetic, you'll never get anywhere stupid, arrogant useless No-good. etc

*The screen escalates with images of domestic torture, Chickens upside down, bits of bridal gear, Chickens eating the cake, Carol as a chicken etc.*

*The other two finished eating, start chopping and grating anything they can lay their hands on. The objects advance menacingly towards her bed.*

*They call out things like:*

Carol we want you  
We love you Carol  
We can see you, don't hide from us

*Pegs start clipping on all over the sheet, she throws it off, the light shines in her face and the knife points straight between her eyes. It takes a breath in, drawing back menacingly.*

## **9. Paul interrupts Carol's head**

*Just at this moment the phone rings. The objects fall out of the air and the screen goes blank.*

*Carol lunges for the phone.*

CB: What?

Paul: Carol? Are you OK?

*There is a fight between the manipulators and Whiner gets the head control from CB.*

Whiner: Fine. Fine. Ah just in the middle of something.

Paul: I'd love to see you...It's such great weather...wanna go for a walk with Mutt?

*Whiner looks at the other two. CB is gesturing 'no', sexpot has been sulking since she heard it was Paul.*

Whiner: Um...later I think.

CB hurls an egg at the counter.

Paul: What was that?

Whiner: Nothing.

Paul: Shall we say 6 then? Rhodes Mem?

Whiner: Uh...ok.

Paul: Later then?

Whiner: Ja, bye. (hangs up)

*The lights go down on the house and up on Paul in his car. He still has the phone in his hand. Looks at it, shrugs and puts it down.*

## 10. Paul daydreams marriage

Paul (cleaning his car and speaking in 3 voices to himself. Hoods on.): Carol hey. Love that woman. What did I do to get her? Bit tense sometimes but hey, we've all got our stuff. Mister Miyake say: "Wax on, wax off, wax on, wax off! (he laughs). Can't believe this scratch... but it won't be so bad once the polish is on...check the tire pressure and break fluid before we get out of the city...wonder if it was that lady why wanted the parking space...Love my car! Wish I could walk everywhere though, up the mountains...need to walk more getting unfit... go to the gym again...can go with Carol, she's getting a bit...it'll be a good bonding experience...wish I saw more of her...works too hard...Wonder if she'll look like her mother when she's older...I really shouldn't be missing this trip...boss is getting a bad impression...promote someone younger again...too many new guys...so important to her though...can't wait to have that lasagne...Carol's mum's a mean cook...with the spinach and that...damn it hands have gone prune...don't know what that stuff is called that she puts in there...together for 27 years...and her mum still has great hair...guess that's a good sign...Carol that day on the beach at sunrise...beautiful...and her hair, the most incredible I've ever seen it...the way the light was catching it...ice cold water around our ankles and I couldn't ask her to leave because she'd think I was a wimp... This rock with the crack down the middle must have been hundreds... and she said 'leave the rock, pay attention to me' ...twisted my ankle and she carried me back to the car...We laughed about it...but I'm always doing that...hate that polish smell...it's like the Kruger park with the lion...cut my hand open trying to help her up...It's like I'm looking for attention...twenty seven years...wonder if me and Carol could make it that long...mmm Carol.

*During this time fragments of his reverie float across the screen, lion, car, food, etc. etc. At the end more and more images of their night together come across the screen.*

*These then dissolve into Paul as a small shadow figure amidst undulating forms. These become a landscape and we see he is hiking on a woman's body. All is rosy but he trips, falls down a slope and into her mouth. We disappear into the black hole with him. A spotlight comes on to Mutt (in shadow) alone in the dark scratching on a locked door, whining and crying. The little Mutt howls a sad and echoey sound. The Manipulators, who have been watching the screen, pull their hoods off shouting NO!!! They pull Paul inside the car looking over their shoulders, under threat. DB grabs Mutt. GQ slams the car door.*

## 11. Paul's manipulators

GQ: Cummon, MOVE.

Scouty(on head): Going, got to get going.

Paul tries to start the car. It wont take.

GQ: Cummon MOVE IT

DB: Need a drive

GQ: (warningly) Get out of here...

*The car starts.*

*We see on the screen houses going by. Then we see a wedding cake flying past. Then Mutt as a three tiered cake. Paul is more and more dimly lit. We see him leaning forwards and gripping the wheel. The Manipulators stare fixedly ahead. On the screen the mutt cake dissolves into red and the flick-flack man jumping and then into the same little guy, all floppy gets flung all about the screen. It zooms out to big red shirt with a black tie and the little guy inside it. Mutt comes running through with a bird in his mouth. He growls and shakes it and feathers start to fly. Feathers drift down, more and more. At first the shadow Paul is catching them but they start to pile up, stifling him, and he fights to get out. They turn into the sea and he is washed away. The sea turns into a laughing crowd. Ominous and menacing. They loom. A little Mutt dressed up as a bride appears in the middle. He whines and climbs out of the dress. A big red dog with a bridal veil appears and the crowd cheers on the dog fight. Big red dog covers screen with little wounded Mutt in the middle of it. GQ turns and watches this last.*

G.Q.( Waving his hands in front of Paul's eyes): Hey hey HEY!

Doughboy: But..uh...

*Paul plays with the radio. Some schlockey co-dependant love song blasts out. He fiddles with it and finds Dire Straights. Houses dissolve into landscape. The odd tree.*

Scouty: Marriage....

GQ: No, no way. Her mother, Jesus, she just won't stop!

Scouty: I think it could be the right time?

GQ: Heard Jennifer finally got that boob job! Sheesh, that was a handful!

Scouty: Enough of that!

DB: Ja, she made me feel very insecure, that one.

GQ: But with those new tits...

Scouty: Sometimes I wonder if I could handle marriage.

GQ: Is it worth it – now that's the question!

DB: Is what worth what?

Scouty: Marriage, marriage with Carol.

GQ: Life imprisonment!

DB: She pretends not to, but she takes this stuff very seriously.

Scouty: Very seriously, and so she should! Marriage is serious. Its once in a lifetime.

GQ: Unless you get divorced.

Scouty: That's not an option.

DB: What if she's not the right one? What if I'm Mr. Wrong?

GQ: Right!

DB: No, wrong!

GQ: What's wrong is that you don't get to shag anyone else – ever again!

Scouty: No more girlfriends. I'm ready for a serious commitment.

DB: Am I?

Scouty: Yes.

GQ: No!

DB: Maybe.

Scouty: We've had three years together now, and that means something. **And** we compliment each other.

DB: and she really knows how to cook.

Scouty: Yes, she's so organized, but I should help out more.

DB: She makes me feel safe.

GQ: And she fucks like a rattlesnake!

DB: Ja!

Scouty: Don't think about her like that! This could be the **mother of your** children!

GQ: Come on – you think about her like that all the time.

DB: Uh-huh.

Scouty: I need to be sure she wants kids.

GQ: Kids....ummm...

Scouty: Because I want kids.

DB: Six! No, two! Maybe she wants three?

GQ: Just! That must be sore! Pushing a baby out of her....

Scouty: You know what? I know Carol wants kids.

DB: Me too!

Scouty: But I'm worried that Carol hates feeling pushed into things...

GQ: She loves it when I push into her!

Others: Grow up!!

Scouty: Now's the right moment! I've got to stop delaying. Carol's getting edgy.

GQ: How about I just ask her to move in?

DB: Why would I do that?

GQ: Best of both worlds. I don't think I should rush in, its my freedom I'm talking about here!

Scouty: That's ridiculous! Three years is not rushing anything.

DB: And Carol makes you feel free!

GQ: Thanks, Braveheart!

Scouty: So we are going to marry her. Yes?

DB: Yes! Pop the question today?

Scouty: Yes.

GQ: She'll like that.

Scouty (checks his watch): Damn it! Look at the time. Gotta get going.

## **12. Paul and Carol walk the dog**

*There is a flurry of preparation and the manipulators hide themselves under their hoods again.*

*Carol is waiting for Paul.*

*He arrives and they have a slightly stilted conversation as they walk. She is edgy and offish, he is a bit nervous.*

*Scouty is on Paul's head, Whiner on Carol.*

Paul: Hello my love. Sorry I'm late.

CB: Again

Carol: It's fine.

Paul: How's your day been?

CB: (aside) Awful.

Carol: Fine

Pause

Carol: And yours?

Paul: Ag, you know, bit of this, bit of that.

DB: (whisper) Should I ask her now? Huh? Now?

GQ: Nooo. Not the moment!

Silence.

Paul: Look a bench, let's sit. (They sit). Uh...did you cook today?

Carol: Uh ha. Brrrrr. Cold front coming in.

Paul throws a stick for Mutt who runs after it and comes back and jumps up on Carol.

Carol: Hello Mutt, hello Mutster

Sexpot: Get away, you stink.

Carol: Down boy. Go see your dad.

He throws the stick again. GQ goes to fetch the stick with Mutt.

DB: Now, now, do it now.

Paul: So, um, I was thinking about our conversation last night...

Carol: About me being fat?

Paul: No man. About marriage.

Carol (CB grabbing Carol's head): Marriage (she laughs) horrid idea! (shudder)

DB: Thought she wanted me...

Paul: You didn't seem that...

Carol: Don't know what got into me. Co-dependant crap from the past.  
BREEDING...!

Whiner(grabbing the control back from CB and to CB): Your lying to him!

DB: Maybe she's just scared. Ask her!

Paul: Well I know you have reservations about the whole institution of it but...um...well... I was wondering if...ah I mean: I'd like to ask you...

*Carol and her manipulators all lean foreword, a breath in and quiet with expectation.*

DB: Do it! Do it! Do it!

*As DB and Scouty hesitate, GQ who has been running back with Mutt in slow mo. Dumps Mutt (on Paul?) and, throwing Scouty aside, grabs the control.*

Carol (As the struggle finishes): Yes?

Paul: To move in with me.

### 13. The fight

DB throws his hands in the air and starts to pace.

Carol: Yes!

Sexpot: NO!

Scouty (growling at GQ and grabbing the control again): That's not what I was going to say.

GQ: Ja, sheesh it was a close one...

CB(standing back): What? What? Carol? Are you fucking nuts? This is the ultimate compromise! Say NO!

*CB goes to the house and starts banging things about.*

Carol: Ah, I just..um..I mean I need to think about it.

DB hits GQ.

GQ (laughing, to DB): Hit me again, spineless wonder.

Paul (Scouty, ignoring them): I love you, you know, and I want more of you in my life.

*GQ storms off to the car and starts the engine*

Sexpot: He wants me, that sounds good.

Whiner(singsong): Loves me, he loves me.

CB(shouting from the house): Don't make me vomit! He wants a domestic slave.

Carol: I want you too, its just...

*The engine revs.*

CB: SAY NO!!!!

Carol: I can't move in right now.

Paul: You can't?

Carol: No. I've just finished doing the kitchen and....

Paul: You can do my kitchen...

CB (throwing eggs) Aaah!!

Carol: Your kitchen?

Paul: It'll be ours...

*CB comes storming back, taking off her hood. She grabs a hand and gesticulates with it. She shouts directly at Paul. Carol stares at CB shaking her head.*

CB: You just want everything your way hey?

Paul(taken aback): No I don't. Where did that come from?

CB: I know you Paul. Its all take, take, take.

Paul: What?

The engine revs again.

CB (Pulling off the arms and walking over to the car, she drags GQ out pulling off his hood) You've got your nice act all worked out but you just want to shag and go. Well I'm not McDonalds and you can pay a fucking maid to clean your slob's kitchen for you.

*Whiner picks up Carol and runs towards CB taking off her hood*

Whiner: Stop it! Please, Stop it. (she grabs at the arms but CB holds them out of reach. Running back towards Paul she collapses with Carol on the platform)

Mutt (DB) starts to bark and whine.

Paul: Carol, please, calm down!

Carol: Its Just.. I want..I wish...



CB: I wish you'd stop being so fucking patronizing with me. Don't tell me to calm down in that controlling way you have (she takes off Scouty's hood, grabs his hair and shouts in his face). Look at you always second guessing, trying to be mister "right"! (Still holding Scouty's hair, she takes off DB's hood) Where's your spine doughboy!

GQ: Your so sexy when you're angry.

*Mutt who has started to bark frantically bites onto CB's leg. She kicks him hard and screams. He lands somewhere and doesn't move again.*

Sexpot (taking off hood and looking pleased): Really?

*Scouty takes the gap to pull himself and Paul away from CB. Whiner screams NO and throws herself and Carol after them.*

GQ (grabbing Paul): Insane bitch. I'm leaving!

Sexpot: I'll get him back.

DB (grabbing Paul): NO! Wait.

*Scouty stands back disapproving of the scene. DB and GQ fight over Paul and GQ gets away with the legs, DB with the head control. DB is immediately flustered and gives Paul's upper body back to Scouty. Then he sees that the legs are going off with GQ and pulls Paul's arms to get him to follow. Paul's arms come off. DB thinks Paul is with him but when he turns and sees he isn't he cries out in horror and drops the arms. Panicked and horrified he is frozen for a minute and then goes for the legs which GQ has. GQ holds them out to him and when he is just about to get them GQ throws the legs so that DB has to dive after them and falls on the floor as he catches them. GQ laughs loudly and derisively. DB picks up the arms and tries to re-attach them to Paul. Scouty glares impassively at him as the arms keep dropping to the floor.*

*In the mean time the following is happening with Carol: as soon as Sexpot has her mask off she grabs Carol's legs despite Whiner's cries and efforts to stop her, during which her top is opened up and she is just in the bra. AS she makes off with the legs, CB stops her and gets the legs away. Sexpot goes after GQ who has just thrown DB off. She takes off GQ's shirt. He fondles her breasts and they start to have sex up against the wall. CB is gathering bits of Carol (legs and arms) and starts to arrange them. She then goes after bits of Paul and lays them out too. Whiner, who has been crying with Carol's torso in her arms, sees Paul (with Scouty and DB) and goes to him to help with the arms. Scouty pushes her and backs off. She goes after him. He gets onto a stool and holds Paul out of reach. She grabs at Scouty clutching and clinging. CB comes up and grabs Carol from Whiner. Whiner grasps at Scouty with more vigor. He is unmoving. She pulls open his shirt and pulls at the sleeves to get his arms down. He just changes hands. His shirt comes off. Eventually she catches onto Paul's body, Scouty starts to fight her. The body comes off the head. Scouty runs off with the head. Whiner starts to dance around with the body and then notices that she's lost Carol. She frantically looks for her and finds the head in CB's pile.*

*DB wanders around lost with Paul's arms while Scouty is escaping Whiner. CB grabs the arms from him. CB has been collecting bits of Paul and putting them with the bits of Carol, ordering them and re-ordering them. She has been joining them together but mixing them and getting them back to front, and then pulling them apart again. DB*

*is lost. Then, oblivious to what GQ is doing, goes up to him to try to get him to help. He pulls GQ out of his clinch with Sexpot. GQ immediately starts to beat him up. DB's shirt comes off in the fight and he is left unconscious. CB grabs Sexpot, knocks her unconscious, and drags her over to the pile of body parts. GQ then goes over and starts grabbing bits of Paul back from where CB has put them. CB punches him. They fight and are left unconscious.*

*Whiner has been rocking and singing nursery rhymes to Carol's head and is now stroking her hair, whispering to her silently. Scouty, who has Paul's head, sits with his back to Carol shaking his head at Paul. Then they both go still. The Screen which was red fades to black.*

#### 14. Healing

*The head of Carol starts to look around. She wonders how she came to this. She begins to recite to herself from the memory:*

On VO:

Carol(W): She rested in his presence. Seeing him smile she wanted to be inside his being, laughing with him. She wanted to give him her breath, so that he could feel the vibration in it, which was there for him.

Paul(S): The outward movement brought him closer to her until he was inside of her. There, so there.

Carol(W): She held more of him into her and as she did she was more certain of her. She let herself be.

Together: Just there, with him (her). Completely

*The puppets see each other. Slowly the Manipulators begin to rouse each other. Slowly, they begin to put the puppets back together.*

Carol (S): She sees herself there, more her than she is with herself. She is safe, lying in his hands. She knows herself as she is. She holds herself. Holds onto herself. She fills up to completeness and overflows onto him. She spills. She wants him to hold her tightly together and stop her spilling out.

Paul (DB): He holds out his hands but she flows through his fingers.

Carol (CB): She rushes out after herself. She is angry with him for not stopping the flood. She crashes down on him. She wants to destroy him so that no more of her goes out. She pushes him away

Paul (GQ): and he pulls her apart. The ocean of uncertainty sucks at his naked bones.

Carol (CB) She clings to her flesh, trying to make something stay where it is but there is movement. Only movement.

Paul (GQ): Everything sucking and spinning. Pieces of himself spinning outwards, touching nothing, forever.

Paul (DB): Forms change shape and slip from his grasp as he closes his hands around them. He catches bits and tries to order them but they shift and, unfamiliar, slide away.

Together (GQ and S): Everything is gone.

Carol (W): She holds tightly the nothing she grasped at. Opening her hands she sees it's not there.

Together (W and S): Its absence is complete. It fills her(him) completely. The nothing, that is there, consumes her(him) from the inside and s(he) is empty.

Carol (CB): Empty as she is, she knows she is still there because the hollowness gasps inside her. Huge, flat and endless it presses itself against her, making itself felt. She feels it there and feels herself feeling it.

Paul (DB): It is somehow re-assuring. His emptiness. He is around it, breathing, separating it from the other emptiness.

Carol (S): She touches the form of herself, the shape around the emptiness which is her.

She sees, for the first time, that he too is in pieces. She feels the moving for him. It is not inside her anymore, it is in the whole emptiness of everything which the inside of her is part of. It doesn't seem to belong to her. The moving for him moves her. She holds him.

Paul (GQ) He draws her in. Brings her into one. He breathes with her.

Together (GQ and W): They breathe themselves together around the emptiness and they are there. For a moment. There and not there. Breathing. Two, breathing, in the emptiness. Breathing it in. Together. Just for a suspended moment they are...

Paul(GQ) there...

Carol (W) and not there,...

Together (GQ and W):...two breaths of emptiness suspended in nothing.

Carol (CB): Just for a moment...

Paul (GQ): Carol, will you marry me?

Carol(CB): Yes, Paul, I will.

## **15. Wedding**

There are murmured conversations with the parents and vague sounds of preparations being made, cars arriving, doors opening and closing, greetings etc. The phone rings.

Carol's Mum: Hello?

Carol: Hello mum. Paul and I are engaged. We're going to get married.

Mum: Carol, my darling, I'm so happy for you!

Paul: Dad?

Father: Yes my boy?

Paul: We're engaged. I finally popped the question.

Father: Laughs. Ah Paul. Wonderful. Wonderful news, your mother is going to be thrilled!

*Music begins to play softly, gradually getting louder, while the rosy light on the screen begins to brighten. The light goes on, and the bridal couple walk to centre stage. They join hands and say "I do". The couple turn to leave, revealing their baggage which trails behind them.*

On VO as the puppets turn:

All: ... and they notice the space of themselves. They notice their emptiness and begin to be full again. Filling up the shape of themselves, to be themselves. To be what they expect to be.

The lights go down on the scene.

END

## **Appendix 2. 6 min DVD of *Dolos***